REASONABLE SERVICE

W. PAGE-ROBERTS

Central BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

in memoriam

H. A. BOLLE

presented by

Mrs. E. L. Prine

KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

Ken a Lawson DD
with best wishes & hope
that he may come home a
"Reasonable" person &
remember to
Xmas 13. W.G.T.

REASONABLE SERVICE

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BY

W. PAGE ROBERTS, M.A.

VICAR OF EYE, SUFFOLK: AUTHOR OF 'LAW AND GOD'

'Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord'—ISAIAH

'Si on choque les principes de la raison, notre religion sera absurde et ridicule. . . . Dieu n'entend pas que nous soumettions notre croyance à lui sans raison, ni nous assujeter avec tyrannie'—*Pensées de* PASCAL

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I Dedicate this Volume

WITH PERMISSION

TO THE

LADY CAROLINE KERRISON

AND

WITHOUT PERMISSION

TO

MY PEOPLE AT EYE

28066

PREFACE.

THE WRITER of these Sermons does not seek to disturb the faith of those, whether they be called High Churchmen or Low Churchmen, whose minds have never been distressed by doubt. The peace of God which they possess rests upon that which is eternal and not upon fluctuating opinion. He seeks to strengthen in the faith of Christ those who have not time for profound investigations, but who still are unable to avoid the influences—hostile to Christianity—which act upon them in their daily life. For his intention he asks to be regarded as a fellow-worker, even by those whose elaborated and completed systems may seem to shame the humble work of one who knows but 'in part.' The former volume was reluctantly presented

to the public; this is offered with greater confidence. The first was the product of friendly persuasion; this is given because the writer has the happiness of knowing that he has been of some little service to the cause he loves so well. He has only to say to his critics, whether favourable or not, that he is grateful for the fair and even generous treatment accorded to his earlier essay.

EYE VICARAGE: *October* 1876.

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EVOLUTION.[1]

'For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.'—MARK iv. 28.

'FOR the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself.' This is the theme with which the President of the British Association, a few days ago, entranced and startled his hearers, alarming the theologians of the North of Ireland, and, I dare say, of places nearer home. With an almost sermonic solemnity he said, 'Abandoning all disguise, the confession that I feel bound to make before you is, that I prolong the vision backward across the boundary of the experimental evidence, and discern in that matter, which we in our ignorance, and notwithstanding our professed reverence for its Creator, have hitherto covered with opprobrium, the promise and potency of every form and quality of life.'

[1] Preached at Stowmarket, Sept. 11, 1874.

In other words he says, that he can put before his mind the thought of dead unorganized matter, and can imagine how, from that dead matter, all the life and order and beauty of the world might naturally be produced. This certainly proves that the Professor has a very fine imagination; but I do not think that the religious world need be so very much startled after all—at least, not so much startled as it was intended to be—by this oracular announcement. The time may come when we shall admit it as a positive truth; and the only reason for withholding our assent to it now is that it has not been proved. Professor Tyndall only says, that he can prolong *his* vision across the boundary of the experimental evidence; but he would scarcely require all mankind to accept his dictum, merely on the ground that he was quite capable of conceiving its truth. The miracles of the Roman Church, which we dismiss with contempt, have more evidence than this for their reality. Equally the products of the imagination, the one of the scientific and the others of the religious, the latter, at least, have numbers on their side. But the reason why we need not be startled and alarmed is, that if the

strong vision of Professor Tyndall have discerned a truth, it does not come into collision with our Christian faith. Certainly the throne of the Almighty cannot be shaken by brilliant hypotheses, nor would it be shaken if they were scientific conclusions ; and if our faith is shaken, then it can scarcely have found 'the rock of ages.'

I am not going to show that the Bible has anticipated this latest guess of physical science. I can imagine someone saying that the first chapter of Genesis not only declares that man was made out of the dust of the earth, but that all life arose, by a divine process, from dead matter, from a lifeless chaos of whose origin there is no account. I can imagine a man using my text, as a divine proof of the vital capability of matter. I say I can imagine such uses of Scripture, because such uses have been made in times past ; first to oppose the truths of science, and afterwards, when they could not be resisted, to prove that the Bible had always taught them. This is a very bad and degrading use to make of the Bible. It puts the believer into perpetual uncertainty. It makes him tremble at the first hint of a new scientific discovery. It plants in

his mind the beginning of untruthfulness, for it makes him wish that something may not be true; and that puts him into the attitude of resistance to evidence. It compels men, generation after generation, to keep refitting the Bible to the last scientific fashion, with the certainty that the work must be done over and over again;—the Bible now proving the Ptolemaic system and now the Copernican, now teaching six great creative periods and now foreshadowing perpetual growth; until the restless and disquieted spirit casts the Bible away, and loses the Christ, the light of this dark world.

The Bible was never intended to be a mere handbook of popular science. It was not intended to do over again what the Almighty had already done. One part of His will was written on the rocks, and in the movements of the heavenly bodies, and in all the varied processes of life. For those who cared to read it and to know it, the revelation was prepared, it only needed the devotion of the student to translate the writing. There is no waste in nature. There was no need that God should make revelations of the order and laws of nature in the Bible. It was done already,

written by the finger of God. And viewed in this way, nature is another Bible; not a Bible which contradicts the Bible of religion, but a Bible from which the will and law of God, in another realm than that of religion, may be read. They are not contradictory, for the revelations are not in the same plane, they do not treat of the same subjects. The Bible of nature is all-sufficient for the revelation of science, the Bible of religion contains the revelation of salvation.

And we may well settle this in our minds, that as we separate, from the mixed and seemingly confused and accidental phenomena of nature, the law or the rule of its process, so from the human words and illustrations and popular beliefs of different ages, we separate and take possession of the law of God, as the gold is separated from the quartz. But as it is in nature, so it is in the Bible. The careless, the indolent, and the prejudiced may alike fail to reach the truth, while he who 'Seeks her as silver and searches for her as for hid treasure shall understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.' Once thoroughly decide that the Bible is to tell us something which

nature cannot tell, and not something which she cannot help telling, once settle it that the Bible is not for science but for salvation, and you will not be afraid of scientific discovery. You will not tremble for the government of the Almighty. You will not be always making dexterous readjustments of your faith to your knowledge; and whether God's voice be spoken from nature or from the Bible, with equal docility and reverence you will say, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.'

But it seems to me, that if the vision of Professor Tyndall could be proved to be a sight of positive fact, it would not even interfere with the old arguments of what is called Natural Theology—arguments which are intended to show, from the structure and order of the universe, the being, wisdom, and power of God. If everything we now see around us have proceeded, step by step, through vast ages of time, from what we call dead matter, or rather from matter possessed of the potency of life, if unorganised matter become organised matter, and organised matter become living matter, and the vegetable world ascend, from a simple arrangement of cells, to the borderland in which

we can scarcely decide whether the organism be vegetable or animal ; and still upwards until last of all, as in the book of Genesis, man, the topstone and summit, be reached—if all this be true—can we any more do without God the Creator than we could do before? At any rate we cannot do without a Cause. 'Either the multitudinous kinds of organisms that now exist, or the still more multitudinous kinds that have existed, during past geologic eras, have been from time to time separately made ; or they have arisen by insensible steps, through actions such as we see habitually going on. Both hypotheses imply a Cause.'[1] Is it a work less requiring Divine power, to bring out of nothing, matter possessed of such a marvellous capability of development, than it is to produce things full-grown? Is it at all easier to make an acorn, from which by years of growth an oak may be produced, than it would be to make the full-grown tree? Is there not the same Almighty power and skill to be seen, in the germ with its potencies, as in the final product? At least *you* think so. For you are this day giving thanks to Almighty God for the harvest, a

[1] Spencer's *Principles of Biology*, vol. i. p. 332.

harvest which is the slow result of natural law and of human interference, and yet not less, on this account, the positive operation of God. A creative jerk is no grander a conception than well-ordered evolution ; but whichever be God's method, we alike adore Him.

But when this mere matter with its potentiality of life is reached, the mind refuses to stop there, it asks whence came this marvellous matter? And what says Professor Tyndall? He says 'Considered fundamentally it is by the operation of an insoluble mystery that life is evolved.' What says Mr. Herbert Spencer? 'The consciousness of an inscrutable power manifested to us through all phenomena has been growing clearer and clearer, and must eventually be freed from its imperfections.'[1] Here, at last, the philosopher meets the Theist and acknowledges the prime fact of religion,—the power manifested through all phenomena, by whose operation life is produced. The philosopher declares it 'inscrutable,' and the Christian says 'I know in whom I have believed.' The philosopher calls it 'the unknow-

[1] Spencer's *First Principles*, p. 108.

able,' and we say 'Our Father which art in heaven.'

It may be quite true that theologians have too much neglected to study the mind of God as revealed in His natural works; but is it not equally true, that men of science have too much neglected to study the mind and will of God, revealed, through the mind of man, by His inspiration? Inspiration is as much a fact as gravitation; and the true scientific spirit does not pick and choose among facts, but studies the law of each. It is just as narrow, to put theology out of the realm of careful consideration, as it would be to do so with physiology.

Religion is as grand a fact of the human race as Natural Selection. The revelations of S. Paul at any rate are as worthy of consideration as those of Darwin. There have been great seers and prophets, inspired by the Spirit of God, who revealed spiritual facts; as well as scientific discoverers who have revealed the mysteries of nature; and we might as well refuse to acknowledge the existence of the sun, as ignore the Christ who lighteth every man coming into the world. Professor Tyndall refers to Newton, and, accounting for his belief

in Holy Scripture, implies that he had given up so much attention to science, that he yielded to the Bible without sufficient thought. May we not say something like this of the Professor himself? He has dealt with heat and light, and has a right to speak of them; but is it not possible that the charge he has made against Newton may be retorted upon himself—that he has not as carefully studied the lively oracles?

For myself I will say that, so far from disagreeing with the general doctrine of progression, it seems to be the constant method of the Almighty. It is seen in revelation, it is a fact of personal religion; and it manifests that great unity for which philosophers strive, but which can only be found in God. For we see that the great God is not rapid and spasmodic and eager for instantaneous results in His operations, but that His Omnipotence is still and patient and unhurrying. We hurry for fear we may fail of that which we desire if we allow a moment to escape us. But He knows the end from the beginning. He knows His own purposes and designs, knows that they shall certainly and infallibly be accomplished; and He can wait in His still majesty, knowing that His time will

come; that by the gradual operation of His patient laws, the end so satisfactory, even though delayed, will come, and is only delayed because in His infinite counsels it is best that it should be delayed.

There is growth in the Bible. The revelation of Himself made by God to the Patriarchs, was more elementary and less spiritual, than that which was made to David and the Prophets. As we read the Holy Books in their chronological order, we can, roughly and in outline, discern the new truths which gradually come above the horizon. When we read the last of the prophets of the old dispensation, S. John the Baptist, we find one greater than any born of woman, yet less than the least in the Kingdom of God. For generations the world was being prepared for the coming of Christ. S. Paul says of the Jewish Nation, it was 'subject to tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father.' And so again we see in the writings of the Apostles how they drew forth into clear consciousness, the germ-truths communicated to them by their Master. Even *they* had to grow in knowledge. He had many things to say unto them, but when He spoke

they could not bear them. By the Holy Spirit they were to be led into all the truth, and that Holy Spirit was to continue with them His illuminating and comforting indwelling, even to the end of the world. And in this promise is our hope and comfort now. For the age of God's revelations in the soul of man never ceases. 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' It is only unbelief which shuts God and His Spirit out of the present and confines Him to the past. 'He giveth wisdom to them that ask Him;' and 'the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.'

But I may not leave you without saying one word on Personal religion, which also follows the same law of growth. And here, if you will let me say so, we often make great mistakes. It happens to us, sometimes, that we are charmed and fascinated by the thought of a religious life. Yes, it seems finer and nobler and more consolatory than any other possible in this human life. And having felt this, we are happy and contented, as though we had already reached the land of promise, when we have but seen it from some Pisgah summit. Soon the pleasant prospect is clouded over; we are in-

volved in the work and the irritations and the subtle temptations of common life, and the religion we thought we possessed is nowhere to be found. The real truth is, it was not to be found because we never really had it. We had that which might have been a beginning; but religion, as the regulating and governing power of every day, is the result of long years of effort of prayer and of failure; of hopes disappointed and desires turned into regrets. He who means to be religious means to do a great thing; and he must work and watch, through many a weary day, until sentiments become principles, and principles have come to express themselves by almost unconscious habits. If we mean, as men who know what it is they mean, to reach the lofty altitudes of a Divine life, there must be stern decision as the basis of our effort. We must not be disappointed if our progress is but slow, if only it is progress. We must not give up our hopes and labours because we have stumbled or fallen on the heavenly road. We must not be surprised if days of gloom and disappointment darken around, so that we keep our end steadily before us, and push onward as best we may. We, too, like God, must be

patient, for it is only by 'patient continuance in well-doing' that the crown of success can give us our deferred delight. Yes, patience is the grand word in which highest attainments are involved; for patience is strength, and he who can work and wait must surely win. 'Let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.'

And as you work and pray, you will not have to make the leap, which the eloquent Professor has made. You will not have to renounce the 'experimental evidence.' Your soul will know God, and see God, and rejoice in God, and be sure that it has followed no cunningly devised fable. And, still holding fast by the 'experimental evidence,' you may ever go forward, for the road stretches before you in ascending progress; and revelation places at its summit, the golden gates of heaven, and even these are but the splendid dawnings of an eternal ever-brightening day.

A LIFTING POWER.[1]

'Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water?'—S. JOHN iv. 11.

As I read these words to you last Sunday night, it struck me that they might very well be addressed to some of those earnest-minded men who, pushing Christianity away from them with a feverish, not to say hysterical, aversion, are yet fertile in schemes for individual and social regeneration. They have a prophetic vision, if not of a new heaven, at least of a 'new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.' And such visions are indeed precious things, although they may in time break the heart of him who sees them; but a broken heart is better than a hard heart; and it is nobler to say with the weeping prophet, 'Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not Thy law,' than to say 'Let us eat and drink, for to-

[1] Preached at Eye Church, Sunday Nov. 21, 1875.

morrow we die,' with the scornful, hopeless philosopher.

And yet what alarm these Antichristian social regenerators create in the minds of religious people. Whenever they speak, the bleatings of the flock and the cries of the shepherds betray the distress which is meant for defiance. For instance, the name of Tyndall is as terrifying as some of those martial names of history, with which mothers in different parts of the world are said to have controlled their rebellious children. And, on the other hand, the philosophers who create the scare in religious minds are unable to resist the fascination of Christianity. They are always saying that practically Christianity is dead, that the Theologic age has passed away, and the Positive taken its place. And yet, dead as they profess to believe Christianity is, they cannot leave it alone. 'Oh yes it is dead,' say they, but they dare not go near it without arms in their hands; it is dead, but it might be alive; and so the best thing is to keep shooting at it; and instead of clearing off the many other enemies to man's peace and welfare, that in time the desert may rejoice and blossom as the rose,

they still, from a safe distance, spend their strength in assaulting the *dead* monarch of the forest.

And yet, deep as seems to be the opposition between us, I think these Antichristian philosophers are by no means the worst foes of Christianity. They at least share with us in one great intention, the virtue and happiness of mankind. It is for us to sympathise with their intention, seeing that it is our own; and if we must say to them, 'Sirs, ye have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep,' the time may and will come, if our faith be not a delusion, when we shall put the pitcher to their thirsty lips, and bid them drink the water of life freely.

Our danger is not from those who have great and noble intentions, but who do not know how to realise them; it is from those who call themselves Christians, but who in fact have no intention whatever, no deep belief whatever. And the number of these, I fear, is growing. You may feel it in the tone of society, in the attitude of men of the world towards Churches and sects, to Ministers and the ministrations of religion. They are not quite unbelievers, for they do not think enough to be unbelievers;

indeed they dislike the unbelievers almost as much as religious people do. Their tone is, 'Why cannot they leave these things alone? These beliefs do not harm anybody, and if they were destroyed, one of the governing and controlling forces of society would be done away with, and we might have the revolution; property would lose its security if the restraints of religion were removed;' and so they are on the side of the angels, because the angels are guardian angels, guardians of the sacred rights of property. Religion is clearly a good thing to hold the masses in check, and so they favour it and render it homage, by going to Church on Sundays—when they have nothing better to do. But as for deeply believing in God, and worshipping Him in spirit and in truth; as for striving to lift their life into a finer and more perfect moral condition; as for consistently aiming at the highest welfare of their fellow men; as for sparing no pains, and retaining no pleasure, which would at all interfere with this highest of occupations, they know nothing whatever about it. And these are the dangerous men of our day, whose tone and habit of mind are catching, because they are rather *fine*;

who act upon their neighbours, and who act upon the Ministers of religion themselves, until there comes a hollowness into creeds and worship which is as powerless to resist pressure as an empty egg-shell. With men who have feelings and souls in them, you can do something, 'but as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool.'

These remarks have been provoked by two articles which have appeared this very month, in two leading monthly reviews ;[1] articles which, I presume, would generally be called very destructive, and whose titles are certainly somewhat alarming ; the one is on Materialism ; and the other is on the Conservative and Religious aspects of Positivism. Now, of course, in the few minutes I have left to me, I can only say a word or two in confirmation of my position. On the first article I have nothing to say, except that we may assent to it altogether. For the writer confesses, as he has ever confessed, that beyond phenomena there is a circling comprehending mystery, a fact although inexplicable ; and the reader who follows the philosopher until he

[1] *Contemporary Review. Fortnightly Review.*

presents him with matter having the potentiality of life, may yet fall low on his knees and say, 'My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.' But there is one sentence of Professor Tyndall which I would have you retain, and it is this, 'What is really wanted is the lifting power of an ideal element in human life.' Yes, in truth, that is what we want, 'a lifting power in human life.' A man who can say this, is to some extent in harmony with the Christian spirit. He at least sees that the common unaspiring life, rather the descending life, which grows more earthly day by day until it goes down to the grave, with just a possible interest in the material of its coffin, that this is not the best thing in the world; that there have been men who have been stirred and moved by nobler emotions, in all times and in all religions, and that these stand forth as the world's very elect. 'A lifting power.' But where are we to get it?

The second essay by Mr. Harrison attempts to supply the answer. Presented, as it is, for our notice by one whose great gifts always command attention, marred as they undoubtedly are by his merciless arrogance, you will forgive

me if, in a word or two, I place it before you. Starting with the confession that a religion is necessary, a real religion made up of doctrine, worship and discipline; and scorning those who in these latter days have thought that the Christian Church needs cleansing and renewal, he comes boldly to the front and preaches the religion of Comte. Already, to the English reader, the Polity of that keen, methodising, egotistical genius, in two bulky volumes has been presented; and how many more there are one cannot say; but there is no end to a writer, who can say the same things over, thousands and thousands of times, without seeming to know it. And what do you think is his scheme of life? It is simply a reproduction of the moral system of Christ. I do not say this by way of blame. It is a tribute to the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing better to be had than the law of Christ, and Comte does well to take it. He starts with the thesis that love must be the ruling power of human life. He says 'It is the only work in which there can never be too many workers.' He says that it is 'Even better to love than to be loved;' and again, 'In the humblest

relations of life, as in the highest, regenerate Humanity will apply the obvious truth 'It is better to give than to receive.' Is there anything new in this, is it not the old old story of the Bible; is it anything else than the 'Little children love one another' of S. John, or 'The greatest of these is Charity' of S. Paul? No shame that he has appropriated them, nor that his Novice has put his imprimatur upon them. At least he is at one in these respects with us despised Christians.

But why are we to be despised if he lives of our bounty? Why, in particular, does he display such bitterness to those who are known as *liberal* Protestants? If by a normal process, the Theological stage becomes the Metaphysical, and this again the Positive, surely he might recognise in liberal Protestantism a fresh illustration of this process and rejoice in it? But is there not something suggestive in Mr. Harrison's bitterness? Does it not tell the fact that our 'reasonable service' retains in loyalty to Christ those who might be driven to Comtism, were there no such alternative? At least, we need not be much distressed about the genuineness of our Christianity when a Positivist

Novice becomes Defender of the Faith. We have only to ask that, as far as we are concerned, he would put in practice his and his Master's teachings; and instead of arrogantly brushing us away, that he would show us that love which is the sun of his Positive System.

But where is the lifting power? If he have no new method of life, what is his new power to make the old method work? He says, 'Neither theologian nor moralist has ever insisted more earnestly than Comte, that the harmony of moral life within us, and the association of men in communion, are both equally impossible without the ever present sense of a superior power controlling our lives, itself endued with sympathies kindred to our own.' He says that 'Every line of Comte's theory of religion implies a power outside of each of us, as well as outside of all of us, of which no one of us is part; from which all our strength comes, and to which all our services are due, whom we can love, and who loves us, and into whose bosom we may return for the life after death.'[1] This is startling. It is a Christian description of God, and is indeed a lifting power; a power

[1] *Contemporary Review*, November 1875, p. 1008.

which made the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and the noble army of martyrs, and the Holy Church throughout all the world. It is so far, not only the moral, but the doctrine of Christianity. But there must be some mistake, for Comte is always telling us that his religion is without a God, and without a future life.

Who then, or what is this great Being who sympathises with us, and into whose bosom we are all to be absorbed? It is nothing but a word, nothing but an abstraction, and not an objective existence. To begin with, it is the general system of which we form a part, and of which we are subordinate members; and practically he says this general order becomes the order of Humanity. But what is Humanity? There is no such existence outside of each of us and all of us. 'Man, Nation, and Humanity are three degrees of abstraction.'[1] There are men and women, and there have been men and women, and probably there will be men and women; and if you like to give a name to all the men and women, who have been, and are, and may be, why you can, and there is no harm done, but there is no such entity as Humanity

[1] Lewes's *Problems of Life and Mind*, vol. i. p. 277.

apart from individual men and women. Humanity is a large and convenient abstraction and nothing else; and the worship of a convenient abstraction does not seem to be a very lifting power. As Comte himself says, 'The best heart would fail in due love for any external power, whose very existence admitted of continual doubt.' How then is this worship of a convenient abstraction to be made real? It is he tells us by the worship of woman, another abstraction, which he finally reduces to more engaging dimensions, the worship of *a* woman; as for instance, mother, wife, or daughter. And so at last, the saving power, the lifting power for the salvation of mankind is reduced to a precept of S. Paul, 'Husbands love your wives;' the salvation of mankind is to be effected by the holy estate of matrimony. Really we need not give up our Bible yet.

I have hurried through this, because it would take me long to deal with every part of it; but I have not caricatured it. I have given the very words of Comte, either taken from Mr. Harrison's essay, or from the new English edition of Comte's writings, which I have carefully read. In very truth we may well say to

this brilliant but arrogant essayist, 'Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water?' We need not be afraid to bow before the Almighty Creator, whose laws and modes of action such men as Professor Tyndall make more clearly known to us; and when such students of His laws make their revelation, we will say, 'Speak, for thy servant heareth.' We need not be afraid to adore our Saviour, for in Him, at least as far as this, Humanity has had its purest and noblest presentation. He has made known for our love and reverence, not an abstraction, but a Father whose name is love; and indeed, when He spoke it, a *new* Commandment, 'That ye love one another;' and a continued and ever more perfect existence beyond the grave; and old-fashioned though it be, until we get something better, our loyal question shall be, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.'

'Now Jacob's well was there.' But that ancient well, which I have gazed upon with deepest interest, is choked with ruin, and no refreshment does it give to the thirsty traveller.

But in the teachings of Him who once sat wearied on that well, there is perpetual refreshment, there is something to draw with, though the well is deep, and a 'lifting power' which shall raise us to everlasting life.

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.[1]

'This is a rebellious people . . . which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.'—ISAIAH xxx. 9, 10.

IN a somewhat notorious newspaper[2] there was an article, a few days ago, which spoke of the doubt and infidelity which were so frequently to be found among the men of our large towns, and chiefly amongst the labouring class. It said 'That in the matter of public worship the upper classes scrupulously perform their duties, and that the aristocracy cannot from the circumstances of their position be aught but Christians, but the *demos* have no hesitation in preferring Atheism.' And very severely it blamed the Ministers of religion for not meeting the new wants of the age, and it said, 'If old faiths crumble and fall, we must build up new ones; where the law of development in

[1] Preached at Eye Church, Sunday, Dec. 19, 1875.
[2] *The World.*

physical things is known and universally accepted, why should we refuse to recognise the same order in Divine things?'

Now I agree to this altogether; but I must, in truth, say that the task is a much more difficult one than this newspaper-writer seems to think it is. If in a town or parish there are some who are not satisfied with the old ways of putting things, who know that science has revealed more of God's will to us than to our forefathers; who feel that many of the old interpretations will not hold water, and who ask that the Bible should be studied, not by a dead criticism, but in the living light of science;—seeing that science is God's revelation, and that the heavens declare the glory of God as truly, if not as completely, as the written word,—I say if there are some in our towns and parishes who feel this, who want to keep their religion, and at the same time do not want to make a present to ecclesiastics of their common sense; yet, in very truth, how few these are compared with the many who cannot bear novelty, who are alarmed at the possibility of change, and who brand every new interpretation as unsound doctrine.

I hope my gentle hearers will forgive me if I say that women, as a rule, are the strongest foes to anything like reformation in religious opinions. And then husbands, who begin to see daylight through the chinks and crannies in the old systems, find it on the whole more peaceful at home not to say what they think, and indeed to give up thinking because it causes more disturbance than they care to endure.

What is it which maintains, in Roman Catholic countries, the outward conformity to religion which only masks a real unbelief? It is the influence of women, and terrible may be the result. Instead of adapting themselves to the new condition of things, and saving their religion, it may be at the expense of their system, they make no preparation for the coming hour of disaster. Day by day the undermining goes on, and still they say peace and safety, until at last sudden destruction will come upon them, 'as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.' Because they would not hear the voices of warning which rang around them, because they said, Prophesy unto us deceits, and speak unto us smooth things, therefore must they be homeless and

destitute when the mine explodes and shatters their dwellings to pieces.

It was just the same, eighteen centuries ago and more, in the first days of the Roman Empire. Strabo the geographer, who wrote in the age of Augustus Cæsar, says: 'The multitude of women, and the entire mass of the common people, cannot be led to piety by the doctrines of philosophy, for this purpose superstition is necessary and tales of wonder.' And to us and amongst us also is there something of the same danger. Women are tremulous, and they are afraid that their husbands and sons may become unbelievers, if modern objections are dealt with by the Ministers of religion; as though they were not perfectly sure to come into contact with them in the common intercourse of life; and forgetting that in the one case the difficulty is met and religion guarded, but that in the other case it has to be faced without preparation and forethought. And some men, who think themselves wiser than their fellows, are unwilling that society should be fretted and disturbed by new views. And behind these stands the firm phalanx of the *unthinking* orthodox, whose position may

well be expressed in the well known Latin saying, 'I believe in it, because it is impossible.'

With such a mass of people unwilling to be moved, some because they really believe in the old interpretations, and others because they think it prudent to leave things alone, what can the Ministers of religion do? If we discuss the difficulties of the age and boldly offer an interpretation, some are wounded; because, as they say, it is not the Gospel. And if we leave the difficulties alone, then we are to be told, by such writers as the one I have referred to, that we are ruining religion, because we do not harmonise it with the universally accepted law of development. Depend upon it the people are as much in fault as the Clergy and the various Ministers of religion. If we are cowards who are they who frighten us? Why the people. They have not as a rule learned to take a sermon simply for what it is worth, looking upon it on the whole but as a subordinate part of the Divine Service. There is too much the feeling that the preacher must be infallible, and that each hearer must be a little more than infallible, since each hearer is to be the judge of the infallible preacher. If you would once

deeply feel, that the prayers and the praises are the first and deepest things of our service in the house of God, then you would be too wise and tolerant to be offended at the preacher's sermon. Whether he spoke old things or new, you would ponder them well, and accept or reject them according to their weight of conviction; but accept or reject, equally without being offended. But alas! from ancient days until now, the people want their own thoughts told out to them. They look suspiciously upon the seers who gaze into the future and who warn them of that which shall shortly come to pass; and still they say 'Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things.'

But there are two other things which the writer I am referring to says. One is, that in the struggle of life 'Doctrines and dogmas, vestments and ecclesiastical disputes, are of very little importance;' and the second is, 'That a morality of every day life and the knowledge of a love and sympathy which surpass our finite hopes and eclipse our feeble desires—these are things which may beautify and cheer the poor man's life.' Again I must say, that little as I like the tone of the article I am dealing with,

yet these things too have my perfect assent. Certainly much, far too much, of our sermons has been taken up in discussing points of theology. Even an old Cynic philosopher, Demonax, who lived in Athens about the year 100 A.D., saw the same evil tendency to dwell on the deeps of doctrines rather than on the simple rules of life. To some who asked him if the world were animated, he replied, 'You busy yourselves impertinently about the nature of the world, but of the disorder in your own nature you do not think.'[1] Mind, I do not say that theology is not a true science; but the science of theology, as science, has no more proper place in the pulpit than any other science. Science in its deep researches is for scientific men; it is enough for us that the general and guiding results should be known. And yet various sermons have been preached, laboriously to prove the existence of God to people who were fully persuaded of it before; to make clear the mystery of the Trinity, which can never be done, when it is sufficient for us, while acknowledging the glory of the Eternal Trinity, to *worship* the Unity; to ex-

[1] Neander's *Church History*, vol. i. p. 12.

plain the method by which Divine justice has been satisfied, when it is sufficient for us to know that God is 'Faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' In very fact, too often starving men have come to Church, but instead of bread to eat, they have received a disquisition on its chemical constituents; they have come for a shelter from the stormy tempest, and the only roof which was offered them was some flimsy hypothesis on atmospheric conditions.

What then does this writer recommend us instead of these? Two good things, a morality for daily life, and faith in an ever present sympathy. First, a morality for daily life. And whatever any may think to the contrary, I, for one, hold that a chief part of the work of the pulpit, is the plain and fervent teaching of daily-life morality. Despite the opinion of those who are ready to say that morality is not the Gospel, I say there is no Gospel without morality, and that the morality of Christ, that is a morality whose inspiration is the spirit of Christ, is a very large part of the Gospel indeed. What do you think of our Lord's own teachings? Are they chiefly moral teachings or theological?

It is needless to answer the question. What do we mean when we talk of being saved from sin? What do we mean when it is said—a special Christmas lesson—'Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins'? Why, just what the words say, that sin shall be taken away, that is that men shall obey God's law instead of the devil's, that is that they shall live pure virtuous and moral lives.

And do not morals occupy a very foremost place in the welfare of mankind? What is it makes the world often so miserable? It is sin, that is immorality; and if we can do away with the sin and the immorality, and bring in virtue and morality, then we shall do much to diminish the miseries of our fellow men. And if it is important that morals should be taught for the welfare and happiness of mankind, who are to teach morals, if not the Ministers of religion? At least at present there are no others. Parents are teachers of morals to their children, but who are to teach grown up people? If there were other teachers to do the work, we might well stand excused. It is not for us to teach science, because there are proper and sufficient teachers.

It is not for us to teach politics, except where they impinge upon moral distinctions, for there are teachers of politics in abundance. But if we do not teach morals, then they will not be taught at all ; there are no authorised teachers except the Ministers of religion ; and it is for us to educate the public conscience, until men feel each moral distinction as a solemn fact, until the force of public opinion fall heavily upon him who violates the moral law, until a fairer morality take its place among us.

But if this be one part of our work and a very great part, why have we succeeded so ill, why is the general morality so low, and why do people who go to Churches and Chapels live such very common not to say immoral lives ? It is because the people have said 'Speak unto us smooth things,' and we have yielded to their words. Through fear of our people we have been a muzzled priesthood, or, as a stern prophet once said, 'Dumb dogs that could not bark.' And why ? Because we are ever afraid of giving offence ; and if the hearers object to new views, still more do they object to pointed preaching on the 'morality of daily life.' The Minister says to himself, if I speak

out on that impropriety, that meanness, or that vice, I shall give an affront to such a person; it will be said, that was intended for such a one, and may be he will come no more. The truth is, our teaching is often too plain and too true; but instead of blessing the Minister of morality and the Minister of God for his saving if stern rebuke, 'By and by they are offended and stumble at the word.' It is as though a sick person were to send for the doctor, and when he said you have fever or pneumonia or gout, the patient were to drive the doctor away, or scarcely speak to him, or decline to take his advice again, because he did not blandly say to him that he was perfectly well. Yet, if you tell men the faults which are diseases in their characters, slowly but surely bringing them down to the grave, they cannot bear it, but keep the disease and dismiss the physician. It is all well enough to say, 'we must be good and self-sacrificing and serve God,' and so on; but what good does it do? The people who say, 'yes, very true, we must be self-sacrificing,' do not sacrifice self; and it is necessary for us to make out, as clear as the day, what these things *practically* mean. Whether it hurts or not,

the truth must be said if men are to be saved from the error of their ways.

And terrible is the responsibility of the Minister of God in these things. God forgive me, if I have spoken smooth things to you, or prophesied deceit. I see, with the seers of every age, the day of account and judgment which is coming to all of us. I see the faults and vices which those who call themselves Christians are guilty of. Shall I let them take those faults to the judgment seat of God without a warning? Then, it is written, their blood will be required at my hand. Must I not speak out against every form of lying and untruthfulness; every species of dishonesty or sharp practice or underhand dealing; of adulteration and false balances and pretending things are what they are not? Must I not speak out against the dishonesty of extravagance, and of not paying debts; against the intemperance in all its degrees which is so terrible a source of crime in our Country; against the covetousness and avarice and selfishness, which allow the needy to perish of hunger; against the lust and impurity of conversation and of action which degrade and spoil so many among the young,

and from which it is said, even the old are not altogether exempt? Must I not speak against the harshness and cruelty of masters, against the fraud and time-servingness of service, against the hatred and malice and unforgiving spirit of some, the envy and discontent and slander of others? Must I not condemn the prayerless, the neglecters of God's ordinances, the irreligious? Whether men like it or not, am I not here to help to save your lives from every sin and stain, and point you to the blessed heaven above? Yes, I must do this, come what will, or else renounce an office which will have become but a mockery and a pretence. For the days in which we may speak to each other are short, and the end is at hand. We see the strong in the plenitude of their powers, taken away in a few short days from the place of their profitable labours; and we hear a voice sounding through the chamber of our soul 'For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.' And so I may not, I dare not speak smooth things. I will not prophesy deceits.

REASONABLE SERVICE.[1]

'I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.'—ROMANS xii. 1.

THERE is great danger that, amid the religious contentions of the present day, we should forget the fact that there is a Christian life we should live. We may fight about doctrines while forgetting their purpose, and, like the armed ruffians of Alexandria and Constantinople in the fourth Century, desecrate the Church with a doctrine for our battle-cry. It is indeed important that we should know the truth, because the truth can make us free. The doctrine is intended to inspire and guide our lives. But to hear men, arguing and quarrelling about dogmas and ordinances and modes of celebration, whose unsaved lives stare at you with effrontery, is something

[1] Preached at Mary Le Tower, Ipswich, March 12, 1876.

ghastly. We need perpetually, with S. Paul in this verse, to fetch our minds back to the conclusion of the whole matter—'Fear God and keep His commandments;' and to see to it that we present that living sacrifice of ourselves to the Almighty which is acceptable in His sight.

Now, without attempting to treat this text verbally, I say it contains a scheme of life which claims to be a reasonable one; and, therefore, it is not to be dismissed by sensible men with amiable indifference. They must live their lives some way, that is, they must have some scheme or plan of life. They may not know much about the principle or plan upon which they are forming their life, but even in the most haphazard hand to mouth life there is a rule of some sort. That rule is what we call character. The general spirit which guides a man's actions, is his character. He may never have decided with himself what his rule is, but he is compelled to choose, to decide, to act; and there is a string of character which makes a unity of his various actions. I do not think men generally know what their rule is. They do certain things because, at the

moment, it seems best that those things should be done. But why does it seem best to them? Because their character is what it is; because, almost unconsciously, they have a rule by which their lives are formed. But what that guiding rule is, whether it be a good rule or a bad, reasonable or foolish, saving or destructive, they really have never decided.

This then, which I think is the general condition rather than the exceptional, is a very unsatisfactory condition; it looks almost like an insane condition. For men to be doing their daily work, and making friends and frequenting certain places, adopting or neglecting certain forms of worship, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, making fortunes and spending them, and getting older with glimpses of the end—all these things done and ruled by a plan, which they have never as it were thoughtfully and intentionally adopted, and to which they can scarcely give a name—this is a melancholy sight not to be accounted for by congenital idiotcy. Surely it becomes sensible men to settle what their plan is, and examine whether it be a good one or not, remembering

that the sands of life are quickly running down, and there is no beginning it again.

The great purpose of all religious and ethical schemes is to give a plan and rule of life. A scheme of some kind we must have, and it is most important that we should have the best possible.

Suffer me to put before you the Christian scheme, and let us see whether it be a 'reasonable service' or not. In a word, it consists in the complete dedication of ourselves to the will of God.

Now I speak to sensible rational men, and ask, do you think, in your hearts, that it is a reasonable thing that you should dedicate yourselves altogether to the will of God? There is an easy way of saying yes to such questions, with the not very profound reflection that 'we are none of us as good as we should be; and, you see, there are so many things which pull in an opposite direction.' But the point is this. If dedication of ourselves to the will of God in everything be a reasonable thing, then anything which is aside from it is unreasonable, is a folly; as contrasted with sound and prudent judgment it is something stupid. Instead of being

an amiable weakness, and rather a sign of a good fellow, it is an absence of common sense. What would you think of a man in business, who told you that he saw clearly that he must lose his money by making certain investments, that it was quite unreasonable they should pay ; and then, with that easy well-mannered way in which men apologise for their want of religion, declare ' Still I shall put my money into it, for one often does foolish things.'

Now let me tell you what I think about this. That you do not really mean what you say, when you say that it is a reasonable thing to dedicate yourself altogether to the will of God. In your very heart you do not think it quite reasonable, because you do not think it perfectly practicable, and that which is impracticable can scarcely be said to be reasonable. Instead of really thinking that complete dedication of yourself to the will of God is reasonable, you really think it is rather ideal, not quite possible for a man of the world—an enthusiasm leading to fanaticism—attained, perhaps, by some cloistered saint, but something quite

> too bright and good
> For human nature's daily food.

You have no word to say against it, that be far from you; but it is too fine for the rough work of every day life.

Now there is something to be said for sensible men who think in this way. They are not merely making a plea with which to defend an ignoble life. But they have seen what has been called complete dedication to the will of God; and they have been repelled by it as something weak and unnatural, only tolerable because it is so infrequent. They see that States would not be governed nor trade advanced, that science would gather no riches and pleasure wave no summer blossoms, if this high-strained unnatural religionism could be made universal. The end of all things would speedily draw near; two items would quickly disappear from the Registrar General's returns, and the only thing to chronicle would be the burial of the dead. Therefore, if complete dedication to the will of God meant all this, or indeed anything like this, there would be little cause to wonder that it seemed an unreasonable impossible service. But the will of God is not what any man chooses to think it; that may be a private discipline for him, but it

is not, necessarily, an infallible interpretation for all.

At no period yet has the will of God been perfectly understood. We have the perfect revelations, but we have not the perfect interpretations, for now we see through a glass dimly. 'There can be no doubt that Holy Scripture contains a rich abundance of truths and views, which have yet to be expounded and made the common possession of the Church, and that the day will surely come when, the necessity and maturity of the Church and the God-enlightened insight being combined, such a result will be attained by means of men of original minds.'[1] And there is a faith, which has been more vigorously kept alive in the Roman Church than it has in our own, that age by age, the Divine revelations yield more and more of their treasures. We are too ready to enclose the interpreting spirit of God in the first three centuries, or, it may be, in that great but ambiguous period known as the Reformation. But the Church of Rome, however mistaken may have been her later interpretations, has ever held, that while nothing may be added

[1] Dorner's *History of Protestant Theology*, vol. ii. p. 4.

to the deposit of truth, more and more may be drawn out of it.

Let us not think in these days that God is dead, and that His Spirit no longer proceeds from the Father and the Son; but in simple faith let us do what our fathers did in the ages to which we so often turn, as if there only God's voice could be heard; let us expect the illumination which, according to their day and its needs, was granted to them, and still holding fast by the living God let us pray, 'Open thou mine eyes that I may see the wondrous things of thy Law.'

For we have had given to us several revelations of the will of God. In the process of nature about us, in the constitution of our own nature, and in the firm laws which govern societies; in the teachings which the history of the world and the Church reveal; and, head and chief of all, in the Holy Books of inspiration, we have revelations of God. Here then is a mass of material, containing intimations of God and His will, from which we must draw forth the guiding rules of life. It is all made by God, and therefore it all manifests His will. There is ultimately a grand union which binds

together both nature and man. The will of God, when perfectly known and carried out, is the harmony of universal nature, the perfection of every part and the perfection of the whole.

To be still more explicit. Would you not frankly say, that any plan of life, which took each life and perfected every power by proper use, thus making a daily gladness; which kept each power in its place so that there was no tyranny of one part over the other, no jar or discord or schism in the body; which cultivated to its highest perfection each power, of body and mind and feeling, so that all that could be got out of the organism was drawn forth, until each man grew, as the Bible has it, 'Into a perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ'—would you not say that any scheme of life which, dealing with the individual, dealt likewise with the family, balancing the whole in perfect swing, expelling every disturbing element, and adding to each the higher excellencies which come from social life—would you not say that any scheme of life which, working its way from individuals through families to societies and states, so operated, that the miseries which arise from selfishness

and anger and tyranny, should be cleansed away—would you not say that such a scheme of life, if it could be worked out, would infinitely surpass Revolutionary rights of man or Philosophical greatest happiness of greatest number, Communistic anarchy or Positivist well-ordered death?

The Christian scheme proposes to do all this. It is a scheme which contains all that the most ambitious schemes for individual and social regeneration have ever proclaimed, but which has a sobriety in its working, a power on its side, and a hope before it, which none of them can equal. God—Everlasting Life—and the individual soul—these are our powers and the scene of the regeneration. Do you still say that it is impossible? Why? Do not get lost in the thought of the many, keep still to the one; for the method of Christianity is, to begin with each single soul and thus work out the renewing. *You* want a plan for *your* life. Take this. Whatever I do, I will ask myself, is this in accordance with the will of God? When in trade I am drawn to take unfair advantage of another, when I am provoked to exalt myself by damaging another's name,

when passion allures me to improper or intemperate indulgence, or indolence keeps me from speeding to another's help; when low and mean and vulgar occupations call me, and the nobler ones, which are for the elevation of my nature and for my enduring happiness, are like to be passed by; then at such times, and day by day and hour by hour, I will ask, in the chamber of my soul, is this Thy will, oh my God? and fly from the spoiling sin. And so each power, well governed and employed, will give its proper result of joy. The business and the pleasure of life will yield their righteous tribute. Peace within and self-respect and high intentions will make of life a thing of gladness and honour; and He who has wrought all our works in us, will draw from our souls the sweet incense of perpetual thanksgiving, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits that He hath done unto me.'

It has been well said by the great Old Catholic theologian 'That since the fall, men had become incapable of offering to God of themselves, the right and proper sacrifice, viz. their own persons.'[1] But through Christ Jesus our

[1] Döllinger's *First Age of the Church*, p. 35.

Lord and Saviour, the way and the plan and the power have been revealed. Through the sacrifice of the Cross all men may be drawn unto Him, drawn from the unsaved world of anarchy and sin to the heaven above, 'where with Thee oh Father and Thee oh Holy Ghost He liveth and reigneth ever one God world without end.' To make life as perfect as it can be here, must be a reasonable service; and this is what complete dedication of ourselves to the will of God will surely bring to pass.

BELIEVING IN VAIN.[1]

'Unless ye have believed in vain.'—1 CORINTHIANS xv. 2.

WHAT is believing in vain? There are multitudes of people who seem to think that you cannot believe in vain, who seem to think that believing is everything, who regard it as an end in itself; who are quite satisfied so long as a man believes *the Gospel*, or believes what his Church holds for the true faith; who are most resentful towards anyone who does not believe what they believe, who cannot have anything to do with a man who does not agree with them on essential points, that is, on points which they have judged to be essential.

It has more than once been said, and is constantly implied, by Roman Catholic divines, that it is better that a man should be immoral than that he should be heretical. To such a saying or implication most of us strongly object, for we are of the number of those who

[1] Preached at Eye Church, Sunday, Aug. 8, 1875.

are regarded as heretical by Roman Catholic divines; and it does seem to us shocking, that anyone should think it better to be an immoral Romanist than a virtuous and godly Protestant. And yet, perhaps, we ourselves are suffering from the same unhealthy sentiment. What numbers of us would shrink away from a Unitarian or a Deist, however noble and pure his life, yet never think of forsaking the society of a member of the Church of England who was most careless and irreligious in his conduct! And if so, then we treat our heretics in the way the Church of Rome treats hers, a way which in her we find great fault with. And if it be said, that we avoid the unbeliever or the misbeliever lest he should infect us with his unbelief, it is for precisely the same reasons that the Church of Rome excommunicates us. But we do not, any more than she, take great pains that our careless ungodly friends do not infect us by their bad example. We are afraid that our opinions may be corrupted, but we are less afraid that our lives may be corrupted. In other words, we practically adopt the Romanist saying, it is better that a man should be immoral than that he should be heretical.

Now, for myself, I am disposed to think quite the opposite. I am disposed to hold, that the believer whose life is bad is in a worse condition than the heretic whose life is good; that if you compare two men, the man who believes in vain and the man who does not believe at all, —faulty as are both states—yet that the former is the more criminal of the two. The former sees and knows and thoroughly understands the obligations which are upon him, but refuses to act in accordance with them, and sins against light, and is the worst sinner of all; while the other blunders in the darkness, and for some cause or other has lost his way.

But the lesson I am chiefly called upon to enforce is one addressed to believers who yet may be believers in vain. *We* are not in much danger of free thinking; I sometimes think our danger may rather be that of not thinking at all. While it is true that there are great numbers, both among those who are learned in science and also among the working men of our large towns, who seem to have lost their faith in Christianity, there never was a time when the great mass of well-to-do people were more sensitive than they are now in matters of religious belief.

Indeed, by reaction, there has come to many minds a genuine timidity, it might be said even cowardice, as to the application of reason to religious thought.

Just as that terrible burst of republican and socialistic fury which took place a year or two ago in Paris, has acted upon the nations of Europe and driven them, as it were, to recede upon the past, so the free thinking and speaking of scientific men has acted in the same way upon multitudes of educated Christians, who decline to think at all lest they should think too much; and upon some, alarmed by the signs of the times, this reaction has been so powerful as to drive them into the Church of Rome. They see the keen scrutiny and daring investigations which are going on, and they are afraid to take their place in the battle for truth, trusting in God to deliver them; but they rush into the ancient and dark prison-house of Rome, and, like the fabled Lotos eaters,

> Steep their brows in slumber's holy balm,
> And hearken what the inner spirit sings,
> 'There is no joy but calm.'

I do not think that we are in much more danger of free thinking than they are, and I

should but be wasting your time if I were to spend the rest of my sermon in warning you against this danger. You are all, in varying degrees, believers; you would scarcely be here if you were unbelievers. You would not come to Church merely to pretend that you were believers, or merely to make people think that you were believers, or that your children might be believers although you are not. You would not want your children to believe in lies, you would do your best to save them from believing in lies. Yes, in a way, you are believers. You may have your own opinions on certain points; but, taking the matter generally, you are believers. Yet may it not be terribly possible that you are believers in vain?

This then is the serious matter, for herein is a solemn responsibility. Why do we believe the simple doctrines of religion? Because we think there is evidence for their truth. There is no virtue in believing, unless it be the virtue of assenting to evidence. No one would think a boy a very good and excellent boy who believed, because he had read it in his Geography and been told by his Master, that there was such a country as Japan. The evidence is

sufficient and the mind accepts it. And no man could plume himself upon his virtue, who believed, because he had read it in the Newspapers, that there had been great floods in France and in Hungary and in some parts of England, and that by consequence the corn crop would be diminished. There would be no peculiar virtue in believing, but there might be great stupidity or wilfulness in not believing. And just so precisely it is with the great facts of Christianity such as the existence of God, and the work of Christ, and immortal life, and the Judgment of quick and dead. We believe these things because we think there is evidence for their truth.

To begin with, they are not desperately unlikely things, in fact some of them, as we may say, are natural things. Looking at the history of mankind as a whole, and the fact that all nations, as soon as they advance beyond the almost animal condition of savagery, have produced some form or germ of these beliefs, they seem rather probable than improbable; so that a man has not to do great violence to his understanding to bring himself to believe, but the way is made easy. Then, considering the further

direct evidences on the subject, a man believes because he cannot help believing; and with all this, it is no virtue or excellence of his that he believes, it would be harder for him not to believe than to believe. He believes because he sees that the things are true; and, to him, it would be criminally blinding his eyes and telling a falsehood to say that he did not believe.

How then can a man be said to be saved by believing? If believing is a simple thing, a thing which all men are practising day by day; if it is a kind of thing which, on conditions as it were, cannot be helped—as for instance your believing that there was such a man as the Emperor Napoleon, or that there is such a man as Prince Bismarck; then why should so much importance be attributed to it in the Bible? It is because there are other things which are connected with it and follow from it which make it of the very deepest moment, which may turn the belief into salvation or leave it but a believing in vain.

For suppose that the people of a country believe that another nation is going to make war upon them, that it is only waiting for the first chance, the first pretext or provocation;

suppose that they believe this, and yet make no preparations, neither drill soldiers nor equip a fleet nor construct fortifications, and then are overwhelmed by the enemy—what good did the belief that the enemy intended to ruin them do? What was it but a perfectly useless belief? What was it but believing in vain? Suppose a man to believe that a ship is unseaworthy, worm eaten and crank in every timber and certain to founder in the very first gale she encounters, and yet sails in her and goes to the bottom—what good or use was there in his believing? What was it but believing in vain? Suppose a man has been told by those who are most likely to know, and that he believes what he has been told, that a bank or a friendly society is utterly unsound; and that he still puts his money into the bank or pays it into the friendly society, and loses it all; and when he needs the reward of his labours, there is not a penny of all that he has paid in to come back to him, and that he is left a pauper,—what use was his belief since it did not govern his conduct? What was it but believing in vain?

Exactly the same is it with the Christian religion, and the Evangelical doctrines. There

is no special excellence or virtue in us because we believe them; we believe them because we are convinced that they are true; we certainly should not believe them if we thought they were lies. But if our actions are not guided and governed by our belief, it does us no good, it is of no use whatever; we are much the same as though we did not believe, for surely we believe in vain. And so it is written in the Bible that, not merely for or because of the virtue of believing does a man believe, but that 'With the heart man believeth *unto righteousness*.' And the saving use of the faith which is in us, is that it may in all things guide and rule our lives.

Take one article of the faith of most of us who are here, the omnipresence and omnipotence of God. You believe that God is everywhere and that He can do everything. When the Essays on Religion by the late Mr. Stuart Mill appeared, suggesting that if there were a God He could not be everywhere present nor yet all powerful, since if He were, He would not allow so many evils to continue, and would certainly improve the course of nature, neither permitting earthquakes, volcanoes, or storms to work destruction—when

these things appeared, strong and stern were the denunciations which fell upon his writing, because it contradicted the great truths which we all strongly hold, the omnipresence and the omnipotence of God. Yes, you believe that God sees you every moment and that every moment you are in His power. But what difference does that belief make to you? Does it stop you from an unfairness in the shop or market or on the exchange, when that unfairness will bring gain? A man would be sorry for his friends to think that he cheated or lied, but he does not care that God sees him and that He knows the pretence to the uttermost. There is no use in talking of his faith, he believes in vain.

Again, some of us have taken possession of the great truth that God is our Father, and we hold that many of the terrible things which some have told of Him are libels upon His majesty. And this to my mind is a true and ennobling faith, if only it be not faith in vain. But suppose a man who believes this, never acts upon it and never thinks about it until he is forced to argue with some Calvinist or other; and instead of daily and hourly loving and reverencing that great Father of us all in whom

he believes, if he lives as though his heavenly Father had been dead and buried centuries ago, so that it was only by a kind of historic memory he ever recollected anything about the heavenly Father, what good would his faith be to him, with no witness of the Spirit in his daily life? Whatever a man's belief, a life without God is but believing in vain.

Again, we all believe that we are created by God to live for evermore, and that our future life will be the natural result of this; in other words, that God will render to every man according to his deeds. There are few men here, few men anywhere, who do not believe such simple, such elementary truths as these. There may be a few who do not believe in the never-ending torment of hell, but even these are few; the majority believe, not only in the eternal consequences of sin, but in the eternal continuance of sin and of hopeless misery. Well, if any belief ought to shake men and arouse and alarm them, it is surely this. It is awful enough to think, even as the few do, that as men die, with the characters they have made, they pass into a new life; still more awful, to be sure that God will not by any future discipline or chastise-

ment restore them, that after death no change for the better may ever be. But whichever be the belief, and either is awful enough, what is it in effect with the majority of us but a no-belief? We act as though we did not believe in it at all, we act as though we believed that in death we come to our final resting place; and neither the solemn light of eternity nor the lurid flames of damnation, deter men from prayerless, untruthful, self-seeking, impure, and dishonest lives. They believe that they are passing on quickly to the new and eternal world, and that each day is doing something to make their happiness or misery in that world—and this both the classes I have spoken of hold to be true—and yet they toy and play, idle and pass time and are sometimes 'ennuyéd' to death; or they work and degrade and descend, till all noble sentiments have perished out of their nature, until the bell tolls and there is a solemn funeral for one who has believed in vain.

It would be well for us all to see how much of our faith is vital. It would be well for some of us if we took one article of our belief and turned that into accordant practice. It would be doing something towards being saved by

faith. Better believe one thing in reality than a thousand things in vain. And it may be, in the last great day of definition, the despised Deist, who believing in God has sought as best he could to serve Him, may find it more tolerable then, than he who on every Sunday cried Lord! Lord! but believed in vain, because he did not the things which Christ spake unto him.

THE CURE FOR SORROW.[1]

'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.'—2 CORINTHIANS iv. 17, 18.

THE direct reference of these words is to the Apostle himself, and to the other chief Ministers of the Church who in that day were the victims of incessant persecution. Nor must we think that because S. Paul speaks of the present affliction as light, that therefore it was what we should naturally describe as light. It was very heavy affliction indeed, and beneath it, the great teacher was wearing away.

He says in this very chapter. 'We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.' This was not at all light affliction

[1] Preached at Eye Church, Sept. 12, 1875.

in the common sense of the phrase. And then he goes on to liken his and their sufferings to the sufferings of Christ, and none will say that Christ's sufferings were 'a light affliction.'

There is something to be noticed in this fact that Paul sees in his sufferings a likeness to those of Christ. We so carefully confine our attention to one aspect of Christ's sufferings, I mean what is called the vicarious aspect, that we do not often regard them in any other. We seldom see in them a pattern for ourselves. We do not often get the lesson that, in one sense, we are saved by the death of Christ, that is, are saved by a death like unto His; that in all things He is the pattern and forerunner; that as He lived so must we live, as He went to the Father so must we go to the Father; that 'by Him' often means by His way, by the way He taught and the way He lived and died. This lesson, too often lost sight of, in no way interferes with the other aspect of His saving work, I mean the atoning aspect. It does not interfere with it, but it completes it and makes it practical for us; that 'without the shedding of blood,' in this practical sense, 'is no remission,' means that without the giving up of

our lives as Jesus gave up His in obedience to the call of God, is no remission, as it is written 'He that saveth his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life for my sake, the same shall save it.' So it is that we are to be saved, I mean in the sense of working out our salvation from all sin, by taking up the cross as Christ carried the cross; that in the same sense we are to die with Christ that we may live with Him; that in this sense we are saved by the death of Christ, because in that death we see the last and mightiest illustration of the only way in which we ourselves can be saved to the uttermost.

I do not think we always have this in mind. We see in His death the price of redemption, and perhaps think that because of it we are relieved from all efforts of our own, that He did the work once and for ever, and that therefore we have nothing to do ourselves. Whereas the truth is, He did the work once and for ever, that for ever men might know how they too must live and die; that He did it, not that we might do nothing, but rather that we might do the same, and that not death itself should hold us back when the call of God and duty bid us go forward. But if we have forgotten this very

important truth, that Christ's sufferings and death save us, in the sense that they show us the only way in which we can work out our salvation, that they do not so much relieve us from effort as present us with a pattern for our efforts; if we too frequently merge this truth in another to which it is an addition and completion; *our Church* has not lost sight of this Apostolic teaching. In the collect for the Sunday next before Easter we pray 'Almighty and Everlasting God, who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility; Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection.' Here the neglected view, to which I am calling attention, is explicitly and distinctly affirmed.

And so, as I have said, in this very chapter S. Paul compares his sufferings and those of the chief Ministers of the Church, with the sufferings of Christ. He says, 'Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.' In another passage he says 'From henceforth let no

man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.' Again he says, 'The sufferings of Christ abound in us;' and again 'We are partakers of the sufferings of Christ;' and in another remarkable passage, he speaks of suffering for the Church, as Christ suffered for it; and as though he had not yet paid the full price nor suffered to the full extent required by the great example, he says, 'I rejoice in my sufferings for you; and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the Church.' Now such sufferings, so great he says, that the outward man was perishing, do not strike us as light afflictions; and yet, lifting up his head from the life-martyrdom which he endured, he bursts out with a ringing note of triumph in the text, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

To tell you the truth, afflictions never naturally seem light to those who are called

upon to bear them. By some remarkable condition of things, heavy afflictions may seem light and be accounted as nothing at all, but naturally and by themselves, we always regard our own afflictions as heavy. It is very easy for spectators to say, when they hear another complaining of sufferings, 'Oh! they are nothing at all, not worth a moment's attention;' and to be astonished that so much should be made of a little. But spectators of suffering may not be the best judges of its weight. In the first place it may be that they are not suffering themselves, and so look at things very comfortably. Then again men differ as to their sensibility to pain. You may lash one horse and he does not seem to notice it, and another starts trembling at the faintest movement of the whip. The same circumstances may be nearly unheeded by one who has but dull sensations, which may be agony to another more finely constituted. Or again, if both are sensitive, yet one may have a special wound or sore which the other is happily without, and then even the touch of a fly drives to madness. Therefore, when we see another in pain, it is not for us straightway to declare that there is

nothing to be pained about. We are all better aware of the stress of our own sorrows, than we are of those of other people, and the heart knoweth its own bitterness. Naturally we all feel our afflictions to be heavy.

But again I would say, that naturally the effect of our afflictions is bad. For when all goes well with us, when we are healthy and happy and prosperous, the mind is peaceful, and it requires no effort to be good-natured and kind to others; there is no need then of patience, because there is no pain to endure patiently. It is true that great success and abounding honours, do, at times, make men hard and arrogant; but in the natural order of things, temperate good fortune and freedom from pain, leave a man in a fairly contented and easy-going frame of mind. Whereas the first natural effect of pain is to make people complaining and irritable, careless of others and disposed to think only of themselves; and if they fancy that there is injustice or cruelty in their sufferings, the result is to fire them with indignation against those who have assailed them.

So far then we have decided that naturally afflictions seem heavy to those who are called

upon to bear them, and that naturally the effect of afflictions is not for good. The question is, can this natural order of things be changed, and afflictions, I mean our own afflictions, be regarded as light and their effects become beneficial? We know quite well that it is possible for the attention to be so occupied with one thing, that it does not notice another. A man engaged in deep thought does not see the friend who recognises him in the street. A philosopher like Newton may be so deeply involved in his problems, as to forget the body and its want of food. In the excitement of battle, men have not noticed the wound they have received; and not until they have begun to faint from loss of blood have they perceived what has happened to them. A mind intensely occupied with one thing has little to bestow upon others. We cannot be alive with the same intensity all over. Great concentration of vitality at one point lessens it at others. So that the constitution of our nature points out the direction in which the answer to our question is to be sought. If there be something else of more importance than the pain upon which the attention can be fixed, then, for every

degree of such attention there is a degree less of pain; with nearly complete attention upon something else, the pain will very nearly disappear; until, by absorbing devotion to some great thing, it is possible for afflictions which naturally are heavy to become graciously light.

But this natural method is the very method of S. Paul. He says, 'Our light affliction which is but for a moment,—while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.' And let us remember, by 'the things which are not seen,' we are not merely to understand the glory of heaven when this life is over; but all those great purposes and affections which dwell in men's minds and hearts, which keep them up, and press them on, and help them to live. The martyrs who in every age have given themselves to lives of real weariness and pain, have not all of them, nor any of them at all times, been sustained by the hope of heaven. They lived for a cause, they suffered for some great truth or principle which they felt, by a prophetic instinct, must one day triumph. It was the mighty unseen, which throbbed in their blood, and gave directness to their aim, and lifted them up when

bruised and beaten down, to strike another blow and see in death their triumph. Like Jesus, they had meat to eat which the world knew not of. Their meat and drink was to do the will of the Father, and to finish the work which had been given them to do. They endured 'As seeing Him who is invisible;' and so, in whatever way, their passionate love for person or for cause lifted them high above 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune;' there was that within which was unseen and would be eternal, which made them bear and hope and work and wait, and made them sweetly forget. Assaulted without, they fled within, and there, with the sure love which was their stay and certainty, with the lofty purpose which inspired them and nerved their arms and made them invincible, their afflictions thinned to lightness and were ready to flee away.

But afflictions borne in this way bring no evil, but work for us, because they work in us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. For there comes into the soul a gentle patience which ripens to a perfect work; a forgivingness to the wrong doer, like that of Jesus, and His first martyr S. Stephen, who said

'Father forgive them for they know not what they do;' a sympathy with others who like themselves are steeped in anguish; an unworldliness, from which fleshly and carnal thoughts have drained away; a peace and faith with certain triumph in its eyes, 'the light which never shone on sea or sky,' a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. This is heaven begun.

S. Basil tells us, how the martyrs that were cast out naked on a winter's night, and were to be burned the next day, comforted themselves and one another with these words, 'Sharp is the cold, but sweet is Paradise; troublesome is the way, but pleasant shall be the end of our journey; let us endure cold a little, and the patriarch's bosom shall warm us; let our foot burn awhile, that we may dance for ever with angels; let our hand fall into the fire that it may lay hold on eternal life.' So too it befell that strange prophet Savonarola, with his obscure visions, and his clear moral perceptions. When he came to the fire, he who conducted the execution said, 'I cut thee off from the Church Militant;' 'but not,' said the sufferer, 'from the Church triumphant.'

And thus it ever is with the great ones of God. They may suffer, but through the suffering gleam the grand love and purpose which have made them great. They have seen, it may be far off, their work triumphant and eternal, and that has been enough. But woe for us, if when the blows descend we have no great purpose or devotion to sustain us. Then each little sting is a burning torture, and with no better future, it will be as it was in the decaying days of ancient Rome, that men prefer to rid themselves of life rather than endure a tormenting present.

'The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal;' and to these things we soon shall come. Even now, in faithful love and fervent purpose, we catch a vision of their happy faces, but here 'We see through a glass darkly.'

DAYS OF JUDGMENT.[1]

'Wait for the promise of the Father.'—ACTS i. 4.

A SUNDAY without Christ. In one sense such was the Sunday which followed our Lord's ascension to Heaven, the Sunday which to-day we commemorate. It is surprising how little we know of the forty days which followed the resurrection. Where the Lord abode and what He did, we know not. His appearances are more like what we imagine the apparitions of a spirit to be. Unexpectedly He manifests Himself to His chosen ones, who at first scarcely recognise Him, and then He is away. There may have been Sundays before this when He was not with them; for there were five Sundays between the resurrection and the ascension, and we are only told what took place on two of them. But whether He appeared to them on the other Sundays or not, they felt that He might appear; they still considered Him as one who dwelt

[1] Preached at Eye Church, May 28, 1876.

in this world, within the reach of men. But this Sunday after the ascension was different from the others. Now they felt He was quite gone away, no more to be gazed upon by mortal eyes, until in some mysterious way He came again in glory.

It was in this sense their first Sunday without Christ, and in another sense their only Sunday without Christ. For the very next Sunday was the great Sunday of Pentecost, when a mighty Spirit came into them, a revealing Spirit and an impulsive Spirit, by which they saw their work and destination, and were strongly and unitedly moved to pursue them. With the spirit of counsel and might which now possessed them they were no longer alone, for they had found another Comforter. In a new sense their Master had come to them. Their minds were filled full with thoughts of Him, but no longer with the mistaken thoughts of a common materialism. His words and doings came back to them with quite a different meaning. Before, they had known Christ after the flesh, but now henceforth knew they him no more. For that Spirit, as it was promised, *took* of the things of Christ, which were facts of sight and

sound and history, and *revealed* them unto them. That is, the meaning, the intention, the spiritual significance of those things of Christ, entered into their minds. Christ's life, in its meaning and purpose for the world, took hold of their understanding and affections; came upon them like a mighty rushing wind, endowing them with tongues of fire; so that Christ had become for them a spiritual and eternal reality, and as such He would never leave them, even to the end of the world. The spirit of that spiritual Christ still directs and impels the souls of millions; with them He is present in loving faithful memory, the interpreter of life, and the victor over death; with them conscience has become Christ, and their ruling spirit is Christ in them the hope of glory.

But that Sunday after the ascension was different from all others. The former things had passed away, the new had still to come. Because in this sense it was a Sunday without Christ, therefore it was for them a day of uncertainty, and a day of waiting. And looking at the facts of human nature generally, we may perceive the special dangers of such a time. When, as it were, we have been cut off from the

past, and we feel and know that that which has been ours, and been our very delight, may be ours no more; that the pleasant days are over, and must fade ever more and more into a pallid memory; and when we sit still with a future yet undecided, so that we have not the strength of the new life which must soon begin; such a time, of memory full of regret and a future dawning with but transient and feeble gleams of hope, such a time is a very critical one in human life. Then it is, in that solemn pause, we make our future, and arise to the new life of duty which opens before us, or wring our hands in helpless despair, and rush or drift to ruin.

There are three cases you will let me put before you, in which something of the crisis, or day of judgment I have mentioned, comes in stern reality. Take the case in which death grasps for himself the guide, strength, and joy of our lives. At such a moment life is completely changed. That for which we thought and planned, and with which each future year was closely knit, is now no more; the present has no purpose, the future no pleasant explanation, we know not what to do nor have motive for doing, and the constraining pressure bows

us down in helplessness. Then is the hour of danger. For in those trying days must be decided, whether a spiritless debility, never to be supplanted by a steadfast purpose, shall take possession of us, or whether, like David, when his child was dead, we shall arise from the dust of our sorrow, and manfully fill up the void with faithful, hopeful service.

A second case is that in which a man has been moved to make a great moral change in his life. There are moments when old sins and their fascinations seem unattractive in our eyes. We have been removed from them, or they have nauseated us, or the healthy breeze of a nobler life has, for the moment, braced us ; and we determine to make a change, to take up a new line, to adopt a long-neglected duty. But great things are not done in a moment, nor old habits and associations destroyed by a simple resolution. And the days of gloom approach. Our old sins, with all that made us choose them, stir their desires within us, and life seems gloomy without them, and the new life hard and trying, with no intermission till the grave in its serious endeavour ; and we cannot imagine,

because we have never yet felt them, the joys with which it will compensate us.

Then, at that moment, the decision must be made, whether we shall journey on to heaven, or return to the house whence we had come out, and take to ourselves seven other spirits to enter in and dwell there, and so our last end be worse than the first.

And the third case is that of intellectual trial and difficulty, which with its hour of decision is coming to many men. The young especially have to enter into the trial I am speaking of. For the mind, unless it is coerced by authority, begins to ask the why and the wherefore of many a belief and practice. Ready to believe on sufficient evidence, it asks for meaning and reasons. Things which have been held sacred, and which thousands have confessed with solemn voices as things from heaven, begin to take the look of that which is earthly, mistaken, and not to be believed. And then, when a first rent is made in the inherited belief, comes the hour of decision. Since some things are false or foolish, is it all a tissue of fictions to be flung aside, as but the crutch of the impotent and the police of the crafty? Or is it best to give up thinking

at once, since it may lead so far astray, and stick to the old ways and never again ask a question? It is then a man must decide whether he will deny the light which has been offered him, recklessly fling away religion, or reverently follow the guiding spirit which has become a revealing Pentecost within him.

These times then are samples of what such a Sunday as that Sunday without Christ, may bring to any one of us. From that first time of uncertainty and waiting, let me tell you how most profitably to act when it comes to you. For if there come very solemn times in our lives, when intentionally or unintentionally we settle what all the rest must be; if we look upon men who are utterly ruined and remember that they were not always so, but that there came a break, a moment of uncertainty, of hesitation, and that then they began once more to move, sliding or striding in the direction of their present position; if on moments often hang existences, and days of judgment come in which we move to the right hand or to the left; then, unless we are fools and mad, we shall take at such times a serious look around, and if we cannot quite see the door of exit, at least prepare our spirits to

advance in the direction which duty and conscience and God seem to point out.

We may be compelled to wait until our path is clear, for we cannot always compel our circumstances to suit our convenience, but there are different ways of waiting. The wise virgins, as well as the foolish ones, had to wait the coming of the bridegroom. Half the disasters of life come from imprudence. In helpless complainings the simple ones declare that they never expected it, that they did not think it even possible, that, had they had the smallest idea of such a thing, they would have known what to do, and been a match for the difficulty when it came. The ruin of fools is that they are always too late, that they are wise after the event instead of before, and can very accurately tell you why it was that they were beaten. But the silent joy of the victor is better than the fluent excuses of the vanquished.

That first Sunday of trial, and those following days of waiting, were spent by the uncertain Church in mutual prayers and supplications, and in filling up the broken rank. Such work as they could do they did, and then, in communion with God and with each other, they waited.

And we cannot do better, in our days of judgment and waiting, than copy their example. It is well to try and get a glimpse of the future, and certainly well to try to get a little above the common things which are around us; well to see things in their true size, and their relationship to each other; and the highest place we can get to is the step of the throne of grace. Thence we may look around us with calmer, wiser feelings, and there gather strength for the hour of struggle.

For let men think what they will about prayer—and that there are many difficulties on the subject none who think at all can deny—one thing at least is certain, that in real prayer, in real communion with God, in the purer and loftier feelings which are reached by the high endeavours of the praying soul, there does come a calmness and preparedness and certain strength which become an armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. In real prayer the soul reaches almost its highest capability, and such real prayer cannot be unanswered; it is its own answer. And if, when your hour of danger comes upon you, it find you still and solemn and satisfied with the vision of

God, you will know both how to resist and how, if need be, to suffer. No agitating fear nor unreasoning panic will then be able to distress you; but whether it be intellectual difficulty or moral duty or the hour of death, your mind will be well prepared.

The hour of waiting may nevertheless be an hour of working. The apostles, in those lonely days, did not clearly see their future work and its results; but one of their college had failed them, and now was gone to his account. The number chosen by the Lord was to them a sacred number. Shortly, they believed, their way would become clear to them, and when it did, they wished to have nothing else to do but at once proceed upon it. Now they had a time of pause, they would fill up the vacant place, and then stand ready. In this respect also we may copy the waiting Church. We must look around and see what yet remains undone, and set our house in order. Weak men think that to prepare for a possible danger is almost to invite it, if not to make it inevitable; that to insure a life, or to make a will, is to give an invitation to death. But the foolish fancies of the weak are no pat-

terns for the wise. When a great thing has to be done we cannot afford to have our attention divided, or our energies dissipated. One thing at a time is enough, if that one thing is to be done well; and in the moment which is to decide our destiny, to be dragged this way or that by neglected but now imperative calls is terribly distressing. It is well and it is wise to make all straight and clear when a quiet day is given us, and we are going to make a new start. The lesson I deeply desire to impress upon all is that of our Bible, 'Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.'

Next Sunday is Whitsunday, and on that day we shall celebrate together the Holy Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. Many, I know, will be gathered together to keep their Lord in loving and grateful memory. You will employ the week, as did the disciples, waiting for Pentecost, in prayer and in holy activity. But shall not this week of waiting, be with some of you a solemn time of decision? Again the call is made to you, whether ye will have Christ for your Lord and Master, or

whether still ye will be ruled by other masters. And somehow you will decide. You may try not to think about it and perhaps will not think about it, but you will have decided; and that decision will be registered and leave its mark, a mark upon your character, a mark which will be legible when the books of your soul are opened.

I pray you may decide as wise men, and that you may seal your decision at the Lord's table. But if you decide ill, either intentionally or forgetfully, your punishment will be, that you will have a Sunday without Christ—it may be a life without Him.

Alas! how many are the Sundays without Christ which some of us spend. Are we getting into the way of doing without Christ, and does this common Christless worldliness satisfy us, and can we meet our death and essay the future without Him? Then we crucify to us the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame, and there remains for us but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, of certain days of crisis, which must devour the adversaries. For without Christ we are helpless indeed. As yet

the world has found no equal strength for trial or for conflict.

Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without Thee I cannot live ;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without Thee I dare not die.

YOUR OWN SALVATION, No. 1.[1]

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: of whom I am chief.—1 TIMOTHY i. 15.

THIS is one of the favourite texts of Evangelical Christianity, it is one of the comfortable words of our own Communion Office; but I am afraid it is more frequently quoted than it is understood, more frequently the subject of a sermon than of individual experience. There are certain verses which are so often repeated, either in sermons or religious conversations, that they gradually come to excite no serious thought in the hearers. There is a kind of hazy sentiment, an aqueous halo which surrounds them, which does duty for defined substantial meaning, until at last they get to be used as a kind of religious padding with which to adorn lean and unshapely thoughts. And a certain class

[1] Preached at Eye Church, Oct. 24, 1875.

of religiously-minded people, quiet and cloudy as to their opinions, are at once crushed into silence when some fluent talker concludes triumphantly with a text. They have no more to say. They dare not ask whether the text is appropriate, or what it means; it would be so dangerously like free-thinking. They can only sigh and be silent and imagine that they feel better. But a house of wood or hay or stubble does not change its character because it has been made to stand on marble columns; the tempest will brush it away while the columns remain firm; and weak and foolish thoughts continue weak and foolish even if they are placed on the strong foundations of Holy Scripture. 'The thoughts of man are but vain,' 'The word of our God shall stand for ever.'

Then again, among certain classes of Christians, such a text as the one I have chosen, produces a great deal of keen attention when it is to be the subject of a sermon. Not that they are in trouble about any sin from which they wish to be delivered; not that they are like the startled jailer of Philippi scarcely able to repress the cry 'What must I do to be saved?' No,

they understand all about being saved; they see the whole course of the plan, from the fall of man, through the Jewish sacrificial system, until the completion of redemption. They know every portion of the machinery, where each precisely should be placed, and the textual supports which must bear the pressure; and they sit down to listen to their Minister, not that they may know the plan of salvation, but that they may be quite sure that he knows it, that he has not left out anything, or put in anything, or given a new name or aspect to anything. If he safely wind his way through the devious course and come out safely at the last to their satisfaction, they go away contented, having learnt nothing and done nothing, with no voice sounding through their consciences—but thou hast not been saved from that sin, that meanness, that ignorance; thou art going back to the work of life, with that same ungoverned temper, that same malicious tongue, that same intemperate self-indulgence, that same corroding falsehood, that same grinding avarice, that same cold, hard, unloving, ungenerous heart. What is thy approval worth to the preacher or to anybody else? Better for thee

if he had stumbled again and again, in laying before thee the plan, if only by his ministry of Jesus Christ he had saved thee from one single sin. Go thy way and work out thine own salvation with fear and trembling, and thy vain pretence of knowledge will disappear in a bright and happy experience.

Now I do not intend to try and go through the whole scheme of salvation in theological and logical order. I do not intend to begin with the fall of our first parents. When I feel called upon to preach about the fall, I think it more useful to preach about your fall and mine, than to preach about Adam's fall, and more useful to speak about getting up again after our fall, than to keep dwelling upon the depths of depravity. And it seems to me, that although Christians are saved by Christ and by Christ alone, yet they are not all saved from precisely the same things, and not all in precisely the same way; that although Christ is the Saviour and saves His people from *their* sins, different as their sins undoubtedly are, of head and heart and habit, and each requiring its own particular treatment; yet that He is an all-wise physician who treats each for his own

complaint, and speaks to one, and touches a second, and bids another 'Go and sin no more.'

Now that word 'sinners' is very comprehensive, it covers a large space and many different things, it means something very different in different cases. Take the case of S. Paul. He says that 'Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' Now in the ordinary commonplace meaning of the word, it could not be said that S. Paul was one of the worst men that ever lived; indeed we have Scripture evidence to show that he was one of the best men that ever lived. It may be said that, like the rest of our race, he inherited a depraved nature from Adam and was born a sinner. But I suppose few people would believe, that if it had been possible for a man never to have done wrong, never to have sinned against God, he still would have been sent to hell for ever because Adam sinned.

It is quite true, as the article teaches, that inherited corruption 'deserveth God's wrath and damnation.' All corruption, inherited or not deserves God's condemnation.

There are only three ways of regarding

moral corruption. They are approval, indifference, or damnation—i.e. condemnation; and we are perfectly sure that upon all corruption the Holy God looks with disapproval. Occasionally we ourselves see in a man a strong tendency to a particular vice, a vice which was strong in his father or mother; and we cannot look upon such a state with satisfaction; rather must we look upon it with pity, and because we condemn it, try what we can to cure it. And upon all evil, however produced, we must believe that God looks with disapproval. The best evidence we have of this is, that His will and His laws are ever in opposition to the evil; and we look forward, through a course of perpetual progress, until far off we see a 'New heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.'

But we are nowhere told that God will send a man to hell, only because Adam sinned; that if he had done no wrong himself still he must perish because Adam sinned. We could not believe such a dreadful thing as that. If we are told, that there is no such being as a man who has never done wrong himself, that 'All have sinned and come short of the glory

of God,' I say, certainly; but that in the matter of actual sin there are differences, that all have not sinned in the same way, that all have not sinned to the same extent, and that God's grace is adapted to each peculiar case.

And, were it not for certain hand-to-mouth phrases, it would seem a mere waste of time to dwell upon so evident a fact. No one would say that there was no difference between the members of such a congregation as this, and those unhappy men and women who, day by day, are swept into the prisons from the abandoned thief-quarters of our great towns; that the world's monsters of wickedness, such as a Herod, a Commodus, or a Cæsar Borgia, are just the same before God, as a Socrates, a Marcus Aurelius, or a Spinoza; that there was no difference between such an one as Ahab, who did sell himself to work wickedness, and the young ruler in whom Jesus said there was but one thing lacking, and that he was not far from the kingdom of God.

In practical life we do not so confuse moral distinctions as not to see the difference between one man and another. Whilst we keep saying that all are sinners, we show that we do not

think all sins are equal. We look upon our sons and daughters as born in sin; but what should we think if they became the companions of the thief, the harlot and the murderer? Should we say that there was no difference in them, that they had not become worse? It is utterly wrong to efface or confuse, even for one moment and but in theory, these enormous divisions. It may be true that many of the worst might have been better than we are, if they had had our opportunities, just as some who cannot read might have been finer scholars than we are if they had had our advantages. But still, they are not finer scholars as it is, and all are not equal in sin.

If men are to be saved from sins, it must be from sins which they commit, and not from sins which they never did commit. A man must be saved from that which is bad in him, and not from that which is good in him; and by God's grace there is in every man something which need not be cleansed away. Jesus perceiving the virtuous ruler, who modestly but truthfully declared that he had kept the commandments from his youth, did not tell him that this was false, that, on the contrary, he

had lived in the breach of every one of them. 'Jesus beholding him loved him.' He did not propose to take away from him his virtues, but to add the Divine grace which was lacking.

S. Paul, before his conversion, was like this young man. We know that he lived according to the revelation which had been given him—I mean the Old Testament writings; that he lived blameless. If I am told that it was self-righteousness, I answer that at any rate it was the righteousness by which all the saints of God, from Moses to John the Baptist had lived, and the only one they ever knew.

We are certain that Paul was as devoted to the sacrifices of the Temple, as he was strictly righteous in life. If the merit of those sacrifices consisted in their being types of Christ, then in that merit, with the rest of his countrymen, he shared. If he did not fully understand them, no more did they. And if, one thing apart, he had no chance as a Jew of passing to heaven when he died, then we can scarcely see how any of the saintliest of his nation could have reached the desired haven. S. Paul had to be saved from his sins by Christ, just as we have to be saved from our sins by

Christ, but he had not to be saved from his many graces and virtues.

What was the particular sin from which S. Paul had to be saved, the salvation from which so made him a new creature in Christ Jesus, that old things passed away and all things became new? It was not a sin of morals, in the general sense of the word; it was a sin of ignorance by which he was led into deeds of cruelty and wrong. Yes, Saul was sure that God spake to Moses, sure that the Old Testament was given to His people from God, sure that it told of a Messiah who should be recognised by infallible signs, and to whom the gathering of the nations should be; but as for 'this man' he knew not whence he came. Clearly he was an impostor who was corrupting the word of God, and destroying the true religion which was given from Sinai by the Almighty. He was exciting the common people against the government and religion of their country; and they might rise again in hopeless rebellion, as they had done before, only to be crushed in blood beneath the Roman legions.

These Christians, so it seemed to his blinded

eyes, were against God and Fatherland, and anyhow they must be put down. They were unbelievers and infidels and destructives, and all power must be kept from them, and they must be crushed down, even if it did look cruel; the honour of God and the welfare of their country required it. Better that a few should be imprisoned or stoned that the whole nation perish not. And so, like many another persecutor of old and modern times, with prayer to God and virtuous living, he went forth to root out the false doctrines and the false preachers.

The day had come of which Jesus said 'The time cometh when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.' And as Paul thought of what he was and of what he had been, his soul was shamed and oppressed within him, and his words are 'I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, in that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious, but I obtained mercy, because I did it *ignorantly* in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all

acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief.'

S. Paul was saved by Christ from a false and mistaken view. His old ardent and upright character remained the same, but it had a new direction, a new intention, a new Lord and Master. He meant well as he rode along that noon-day, with Damascus in view. He was a pillar of orthodoxy, and zealous for the faith ; he was, so it seemed to him, doing a service for God and religion, when suddenly the piercing words which rent his soul were heard, 'Why persecutest thou me ? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest ;' and he was converted. He saw his errors, all his terrible blunder with its sin ; it pleased God to make a change in his thoughts and perceptions, it pleased God to *reveal* His Son within him ; and not from his old virtuous and God-fearing life, but from his false views and misleading ignorance did the heavenly Father save him.

I cannot however complete to-night the subject which I have begun. I know not what particular salvation you my brother are in need of, but I am sure that for one and all there is a salvation in Christ. It may be that in the order

of His Providence, you have had opportunities of being saved from false views, and it may be you have hugged your old opinions, and forsaken and reviled those who were God's messengers of light. Saul could say 'I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.' What can you say? That you carefully and prayerfully thought and were patient; that at least if *you* could not see it, still you were loving and long-suffering with those who brought strange things to your ears? Remember we cannot always find an excuse in ignorance. If our ignorance come from obstinacy or from indifference, then it cannot be an excuse, it rather increases our guilt. But whatever be the salvation your soul specially needs, seek that one thing, and rest not until you find it. It will be no answer to say to the Judge, I was satisfied with my Minister; He may say to thee, But how couldest thou be satisfied with thyself?

YOUR OWN SALVATION, No. 2.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.—1 TIMOTHY i. 15.

I POINTED out last week, that salvation, which means much the same as deliverance, may be applied to very different states; that it must therefore have variations of meaning, and be effected by different methods, though always by the same Saviour. Just as one man may be saved from drowning, and another from bankruptcy, and another from a misleading delusion, and they may be all said to be saved; but the methods for restoring suspended animation would not pacify a meeting of angry creditors, nor be a tonic to a deranged nervous system. Each is saved from his own evil, and each is saved by something which is adapted to the saving from that particular evil. And exactly the same is it with salvation in the matter of

[1] Preached at Eye Church, Oct. 31, 1875.

religion. There are certain things which one man needs saving from, and other things which another man needs saving from, and some things which are true and good in men, from which they do not need saving; and we must deal with the particular form of disease if we are to administer saving medicine.

Christianity is not a mere magical charm, nor a universal quack medicine; it is a Divine method and plan of salvation. And it would be needless to dwell upon such self-evident things were it not that these different processes are so often, I daresay unintentionally, disguised by phrases and sentences, which are most valuable when they are understood and properly applied, but which convey little meaning to the uncritical hearer. For instance, you may have heard the direction given to a religious inquirer, whose moral and spiritual condition the teacher may know nothing whatever about, you may have heard the direction perhaps repeated again and again, with growing fervour, 'Come to Christ.' 'Come to Christ.' Yes, I say certainly. As a Christian Minister, and one who believes that for all our evils there is either cure or strength to bear in Christ, I too say 'Come to Christ.' But

unless I know the particular state of the person who needs my advice, and explain to him what I mean by coming to Christ, and what special grace and blessing Christ will give, and on what conditions and in what way, I do him no good. He answers, 'What do you mean by coming to Christ? If, as you tell me, He is everywhere present, then I cannot be nearer to Him than I am at this moment. What is coming to Him who is always with me? If the preacher says it means "Believe in Him," the penitent may answer, "I do believe in Him, I have never doubted in my life, how else can I come?"'

You see, these oft-quoted phrases do not meet the case of those who are in any entanglement, unless they are opened up and explained. When Jesus said, 'Come unto me, ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' the people who heard Him had a clear understanding of His meaning. They knew nothing about those great doctrines which since that time have become the heritage of Christendom. The disciples and the chosen apostles knew nothing then of atonement or justification by faith or sacramental grace.

They did not know even that Christ was going to die a violent death, much less did they know the significance of that death. They had worldly, mistaken notions; a complete misconception of His purposes and work, from which they needed saving. But they knew that He was teaching men some new truths about God, and some new rules for the conduct of life. The common people would not have heard Him gladly, if His words had carried no meaning to their minds; and when Jesus spoke of the cities to which he had made known those same truths about God and those same rules for life, but which had refused to listen and had cast Him out, He told them that it was the pride of their hearts, their hard unteachable unchildlike spirit, which put the higher teaching from them; and then he said to those who followed Him, who were so utterly ignorant of what we know as essential doctrines, 'Come unto me . . . . . and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' The words were sweet in their ears, as they still are in ours, enriched as they are with fuller meaning, for they sounded like one of their old

and precious hymns 'The meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach His way.'

Yes, there are different things to be saved from, and by different methods Christ saves us; and coming to Him and learning meekness, is humbly submitting to His way. To one it is said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' To another who needs a different treatment for a different complaint it is said, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;' and to a third, it is declared, 'We are saved by hope.'

Now, I explained last week, that S. Paul was saved from a mistaken belief, from something which he did ignorantly in unbelief. His moral character in every other respect needed no change, no more than did that of the young nobleman whose spotless virtue was recognised and commended by Christ. He had a false creed from which he needed deliverance. He verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Christ, until it pleased God to reveal His Son within him, and then he preached the faith which once he destroyed. Christianity, when it was first taught, was a totally new faith to those who heard it; they had

to change their creed, and instead of believing in idols, they had to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Father who was God over all blessed for evermore. Multitudes of them doubtless, like the Magdalene, had to be saved from base and bad lives; but the first message to the men of all other religions, as it is the first message of our missionaries in foreign lands, was 'Believe in Jesus Christ;' and the answer in such cases was and is, 'Who is He, that I might believe in Him?' But to those who have been born and bred Christians, who have been taught the doctrines of Christianity from their childhood, and who, without a question, completely and ungrudgingly accept them, the same message, in precisely the same sense, is unnecessary. It is not knowledge of Jesus and His salvation which they need, it is the real working of it out in their individual lives.

Still at times it seems to me that many of us, who are so completely Christian, need to be saved from false views; and the reason that so many good and pious people are sad and weary, without rest in their souls, is that they have not believed in Christ. They tell you that they are not happy, that they have no

confidence, no assurance, no witness of the Spirit; and why is this? Because they do not believe in Christ's Revelation: they do not accept His finished work. The Great Teacher has laid it down, and it is the cardinal truth in His system and nothing can add to it or take from it, that the Maker of the Universe, the Almighty, is at the same time the All-Father, who says to His guilty ones, 'Son thy sins be forgiven thee;' to whom we may go in our penitence and trouble, and be sure that He looks tenderly upon us, and like as a Father pitieth His children. Still, people who are sorry for their sins and try to be better ask in anguish, 'Do you think God will forgive me? may I dare to hope, for I cannot find peace?' I say He does forgive you; and this is the true ministerial Office of Absolution, 'to declare unto His people being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins.' 'Be it known unto you, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.' The forgiveness is as sure as the throne of God, and if you have no peace, it is because you do not believe in Christ, and in His saving revelation; you have a mistaken creed, as Paul had; and until you simply accept with fullest

faith Christ's revelation of a heavenly Father, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, you cannot have peace. It quite depends upon yourself; there is no change necessary in God, as it is written 'Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' He hath forgiven thee, thou penitent sinner, but if thou wilt not believe it, then the clouds must remain. But remember the clouds are not of the heaven, they are of the earth.

But there are others who need to be saved from bad habits and great vices and irreligious lives. The case of these is not met merely by a message of pardon, for then would they continue in sin that grace might abound. The need is a method of renewal, a plan of salvation, and constant work in accordance with that plan. The special word to such is not so directly 'Believe,' as 'Work.' 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' And here a number of varying cases come before the mind; from that of the blaspheming drunken ruffian, to that of the educated, idle, useless, irreligious man of the world. In this respect it is often the case, that a life, otherwise pure and capable of great good, is spoiled and ruined by one

constant mastering sin. Take for instance the sin of drunkenness, which is so fearfully common in England, and which at the present moment excites so much attention amongst moralists of all parties.

There is a scheme known as the Permissive Bill, which has won a good deal of approval among certain classes, and within the last week has received the commendation of a prelate, as much distinguished for vigorous sense and assaulting courage, as he is for untiring industry as a Bishop of the Church. Now, much as I dislike drunkenness, much as I see the misery and degradation which it produces, yet I do not see that those who like and properly use wine or anything of the kind, should be forced to discontinue the use of it because there are others who abuse it. If they like to forego, of their own free will, the use of it for the good of others, they are right to do so, and all honour be to those who make a sacrifice for the sake of their fellow-men. But if all the good things which we should like to see take place in our country, are to be forced upon us by legislative action, then, I say, it is a good thing that people should worship God in Church

or Chapel on Sunday; and what would our Permissive Bill people think of that? and some of them are said to be more enamoured of teetotalism than they are of Christianity. I ask what would they say, if when two-thirds of a parish voted it, everybody were compelled, each Sunday morning and evening, to go to a place of worship, and, if necessary, conducted there by the policeman. I think teetotalism for some people is a very good thing. Some men are total abstainers from certain kinds of food, because they do not agree with them; and if intoxicating liquors disagree so much with some people as to make them drunk, if the smallest use of them stimulates to excess, then they are wise and right to give up the use of them altogether. But one man's head and stomach and power of self-control, are not to be made the laws for a better regulated life. As a Minister of religion whose work it is to make known Christ's way of salvation, I have to deal with the slaves of various evil habits. There are other sins, besides the vulgar one of drunkenness, which bewitch men, and hold them in their fascination, which cannot be cured by Permissive Bill legislation; and they who commit

them are just as ready to say that they cannot help themselves as is the miserable drunkard.

Now it is quite certain that the work of complete salvation from any firmly founded habit must be long and wearisome. And one reason why there is so little moral salvation is, that while men spend months and years in learning an art or a language, they expect by a prayer or two once a week to become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Why, in some cases, you must go on trying and watching and praying, until you die. But you have that sin upon you and you wish to be saved from it. You have conviction of sin. Now for conversion. First a firm determination, fenced about with all solemn circumstances and associations, never again to commit that sin ; a firm determination to do everything, which is the most opposed to it. This is moral conversion ; it is taking a new position, turning in a new direction. Then, the most earnest and solemn prayers to God for His grace to save you when the temptation comes. That is the beginning. If there is one special time when you are most tempted to that sin, set that time apart for prayer ; if there is one particular place where you are tempted to

that sin, never go near it. Each day, when you get up, remember the sin and pray against it; *let your soul lift itself up in holy protest before God against it*; and if you have neglected the worship of Almighty God, be sure to turn once more to it. Let nothing keep you from it. At every Communion Service, as you kneel before God's altar, call up your sin to mind, and there renounce it as you keep in remembrance your self-renouncing Lord. Never, because you have been quiet for a time, never be over confident, but use all the means you can that you be not taken unawares; and do some work to put down in others the evil which has mastered you in the past The sense of shame is a powerful help in maintaining consistency. If you have been, for instance, very unmindful of your religious training by public worship, and have made up your mind to be better, try to impress some one else, negligent like yourself, with your new intentions; ever be leading some unworshipping soul to the house of God, and you will be strengthened to be firm when you see those whom you have yourself led into better ways.

But, you say, this is desperately hard work;

it is giving up one's life to it. But this is just what Christ says ; this is just His method of salvation. 'He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake, the same shall find it.' If you want a ticket to get into heaven when you can sin no more upon earth, I do not know where it is to be had ; but if you would be saved from sin, you must work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

And now I must close. The questions of the disciples come to my mind, 'Who then can be saved?' 'Are there few that be saved?' And I answer, I know not; I know only that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. In each age and each day Christ's flock may be a little one, but who can count the numbers of eternity? The purposes of God are infinite. He is gracious, His mercy is everlasting ; Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and wheresoever there are sinners He came to save them all ; for 'God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the *world* through Him might be saved.' To the question 'Are there few that be saved?' my answer shall be a prayer, 'That it may please Thee to have mercy upon *all* men.'

GREAT MEN.[1]

Of whom the world was not worthy.—HEBREWS xi. 38.

THIS chapter contains a list of great names, names of men who were notable in their day, names familiar to us all now after the lapse of centuries. Children and unlearned people, in this far off part of the world, still know them and their great deeds; they are held up for admiration in many a land which in their day was unknown; but too many of them in their own times were neglected and oppressed. Now held in universal honour, the inspired epitaph is a true one, 'Of whom the world was not worthy.'

And herein it behoves us to have a care, how we judge the men of our own day who take a leading part in the conduct of affairs, and compel the notice of their fellows. It is easy enough to load them with flatteries if they

[1] Preached in Eye Church June 6, 1875.

be on our side: but should they be teachers of new things, with new ways and new ideas and new modes of speech, which some denounce and others mock at, then it becomes us to be cautious and patient. Great things are not so well seen when you are close to them. You may stand beneath the façade of St. Peter's at Rome, and form but a feeble conception of its magnitude; and even when you remove to some little distance, it is obscured by the crowd of vulgar buildings which surrounds it. But when you have journeyed twenty miles away across the level campagna, and then turn and look for Rome, it is St. Peter's which you see, as though it hung from heaven suspended in the lucid air, and the crowding, encircling meanness has disappeared. And so it is with great men. We need to be at a distance rightly to estimate their magnitude. When we see them day by day, we are likely to think ourselves their equals, and to measure them by ourselves. The petty passions and rivalries of the envious and the pretentious hide them from our view. But the crowd of small and noisy detractors and rivals is quickly forgotten when the grave has hidden it; and then, year by year as

the distance grows, the great characters stand forth in their true proportions, mighty and majestic. Yes, we must be careful lest of us it should be said in time to come, that we were not worthy of God's greatest gifts, the great men He sent us; lest of us it be asked in the future, 'Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?'

Now it must strike you that these great men, whose deeds or whose names are recounted in this chapter, are very unlike each other; unlike in general character, as they are unlike in circumstances. Indeed, of some of them, you would scarcely say that they were moral or religious men. In what respect is it that they, so different from each other as they undoubtedly are, are alike? It is, that they are all alike said to have been faithful men, that is, men full of faith. And herein we may notice that the possession of faith is the prime capability for a religious life, as it is also the first qualification for the successful conduct of any great undertaking. The feeble men of the world are the men who do not much believe in anything, the idlers and the men without a purpose, the men who have nothing to do, who are just as much prepared for this as that,

if only it is not a burden ; who could not argue for a cause or keep steadily on after it, because they have no convictions, or at least their convictions are not worth taking any trouble about ; the men who are ready to say, 'just as you like, it is all the same to me, so long as I am not bored.' These are the men, the intention of whose existence one cannot imagine. You cannot tell what they were made for. Even Natural theology would fail to detect their *raison d'être*. A butterfly seems to know what he is doing, and generally to be rather in a hurry about doing it ; but these limp, lounging inutilities are not to be explained. But there is one thing you may say about them, that believing really in nothing and yet too aimless actually to disbelieve, such men are quite incapable of the religious life. They are without its prime requisite, and that is faith.

By faith I mean the firm grip of some conviction, some purpose or other ; so that there is decision and earnestness, and a marked out line in life. Wherever you have this, there you have the material out of which religion may be made. The man who takes up a cause and holds by it and fights for it, even if the cause be a mistaken

one ; the man who is loyal and true to a person, and stands by him and speaks out for him ; the man who has convictions which belong to him, and give him a look and character ; such a man, however worldly he may be, however selfish or however immoral, may by God's grace be converted to genuine piety. That power of fidelity, that faculty of faith which he already possesses, may be turned in another direction, it may be converted. Instead of fastening its strong grasp upon merely human or temporal purposes, it may seize upon God and Christ and eternal life. The power of faith is already in the man's possession : it only needs a new and better direction.

It is said, that 'out of nothing, nothing can come.' And as for your men who believe anything and everything and at the same time nothing, in precisely the same way ; the men who never were on fire for a political or a social creed ; who never glowed for a friend ; who do not understand earnest men ; but who let slip little jokes upon a man whose soul is stirring within him, which hurt him, and who yet never know it, and still less intend it ; yes, who come to Church, and go through the forms with a faint

touch of feeling that there is not much in it, 'All done in an hour and a quarter to-night;' well I say, I do not know how they are to be saved from such poorness of nature, how they are to become strong and great. There is nothing to work upon. Out of nothing, nothing comes; and you might just as well try to drag a luggage train with a sigh, as to bend in deathless loyalty before God such vaporous souls. These great men of whom this chapter speaks were great because one and all were great in faith.

But if you look at them again, much as they differ, their faith was alike; it was religious faith. I have said that wherever there is faith there is a capability of religion; but the faith of these men was actively religious. I do not mean that they were all holy men. Some of them were far from it indeed. But it was not their vices which made them great; they did not perform their great deeds by the help of their vices. That for which they have great names, and that which gave them power to do great things, was the religious faith which stirred them. It was religious because it took hold of God. They believed, one and all of them, opposite as they were in moral character and religious susceptibility, that God Himself had

positively told them to do the things they did. Noah with his ark, Abraham in his emigration, and again in the sacrifice of his son; Moses before Pharaoh, and Joshua at the siege of Jericho; Gideon with his swords and pitchers, and Samson with the ass's jaw; each, in the moment of his conflict or in the path he took, believed that God had bidden him act, that God said, Do it; and that was a fact which nothing could explain away, and from which nothing could release him. However wild or cruel or sensual he might have been in his common life, now the voice of God was ringing through his soul, he knew neither hesitation nor doubt nor fear. He must be up and act at once, for the trumpet was pealing, and it gave no uncertain sound. And so, *sure* that they were right, and sure that God was with them, they went on to certain victory, and whether their foes were moral or material, before the might of faith the stoutest walls must crumble.

And do you know what it is which has given such mighty power to the religious leaders of the world, and still inspires with an unimagined force the unlettered revivalist? Why is it that the men whose intellects you

despise, whose reasonings fall upon your ear like baby talk without its charm, whose vulgarity affronts and repels you; why is it that yet they hold you, and you feel that there is more in them than in others? Why have they founded religions and sects, with such a poor apparatus of doctrines often beneath contempt? It was their faithfulness which gave them power. One thing at least they believed, and that was their rock which none could move, that God was speaking by them, that they were speaking God's words; that He had told them, and that He saw them, and that to Him they must give account. With such a faith, gibes and sneers and hardness and cruelty could do nothing at all; it was God they saw, and not the angry or the mocking multitude; 'They endured as seeing Him who is invisible.' The voice which sustained them and made them brethren was, 'Now then we are ambassadors . . . as though God did beseech you by us'; and when they were told that they were unlearned and ignorant men, in strength of coming victory they cried, 'Not by might or by power, but by My spirit saith the Lord.'

And here I must draw to a conclusion. But

I can imagine some one saying, Where is the application? I think a sermon is either a very poor one, or the people dull of hearing, when you have to say at the end what it has all been about. Have not I been telling you of men who did great deeds in days gone by; men who were not understood, and not appreciated at their proper value by those amongst whom they lived who are condemned as not being worthy of them? And is not the lesson clear, that we should be slow to judge, and patient in examining those who, in our day, fill foremost places? It is quite possible that they may be wiser than we are; and that when we are forgotten our children may sing their praises as reformers and regenerators, whom we denounced as destroyers or blasphemers. I have told you what it was which gave them strength, in the midst of their faults and weakness, and has handed down their names from century to century, and sown them in every land. We have seen that it was faith in God, which aroused them, and armed them, and banished fear, and led them to success. They saw God, and in that strength they could do all things. And are you not feeling the application?

I was asked this week to preach on 'The presence of God;' and in my way I have done so, and 'He that hath ears to hear let him hear.' But methinks that even that feeble bending faithless thing, whose purpose in the world we cannot comprehend, might be girded into sinewy vigour by the sight of God. The terror of the earthquake shock has imparted strength to limbs which had forgotten their office; and the sight of God should brace the bedridden languishing soul. And so it is in our worship, and in our daily work. You come to Church, and get through the service, and there is standing up, and sitting down, and being a little tired, and then the fresh forgetful walk in the pleasant evening; and do you think that you have been in the presence of God? You did not speak to Him in prayer; you did not praise Him with Psalm and Hymn; you did not hear His voice; and so it has been all a weariness and a waste, for you have had no God with you, and no faith. And now you go to the work of the week. The old life begins again, and you say you cannot help it; that you know it is mean and shifty and insincere; you know that your old temptation will meet you and beckon you on, and that you will

again go after it. And there is the devil of lying, and there is the devil of dishonesty, and there is the devil of uncleanness, and there is the devil of drunkenness, and there are the devils of hatred and quenchless malignity; and we go forward, all unprotected to our ruin, when, did we but lay hold upon God, the fiends would vanish away. Yes, it is by faith we must be saved, and by faith we must be strong, and that faith must be faith in the presence of God; 'And in Thy presence is the fulness of joy; and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.'

REVIVALISM.[1]

Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more.—S. John viii. 11.

Are you saved? This question has, within the last few months, been asked again and again, in those large religious meetings[2] which have attracted so much notice, with more than usual fervour and singularity. Those who are not saved have been called upon to stand forth and declare themselves, and prayers have been made over them, and directions given them that they may be saved. But the question, in my humble judgment, is too large and too difficult to be answered by anybody straight off with a yes or a no. I think that those who asked the question, and their body-guard who gave amiable countenance to it, might themselves have stood up with the more miserable sinners, because even they were not saved to the utter-

[1] Preached at Westminster Abbey, July 25, 1875.

[2] Revival meetings of Messrs. Sankey and Moody.

most ; and that the prayer we have made to-night without respect of persons, comprehends the whole reach of the subject, ' Oh Lord, shew Thy mercy upon us, and grant us Thy salvation.'

But there was something which those fervent questioners meant, and something which their hearers meant, which it is well for us to understand. We are not bound to go about with a large supply of reverence ever at the disposal of any folly which may present us with a text. At least the Bible deserves to be as well treated in one respect as other books, and that is, it deserves to be understood,—a treatment which is not always accorded to it by those who profess most highly to value it. But when we see sensible religious men, in great numbers, deeply interested in such a work as that which has been going on, and in this very question around which that work has revolved, it does not seem out of place to consider it attentively ; and, if a part of a great subject has been dealt with as though it were the whole, we must do our best to complete it.

The question, Are you saved ? has been followed by another one which serves to explain it, and the second and supplementary question is

'Have you found peace?' Now here we begin to see the nature and the extent of this question. Clearly, it refers to the state of the soul brought face to face with Almighty God; and it is a question which can only be understood by those to whom God is an intense reality, and a sense of sin a present pain. This is a state which possibly some of us can scarcely understand; one which seems rather unreal, almost verging on fanaticism. Of course we believe in God, we should be sorry to be thought Atheists; and of course we are sinners like everybody else; that is, human nature is human nature, and that is about all. We have no time for these things, but on we go with the hurrying crowd, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, and know not until the flood come and take us all away.

I think there are periodic tides in the emotions as well as in the intellect. One age is marked by a predominant thought or mode of thought, and another by a different one. It is easy, for instance, to perceive the difference in religious thought between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But it has not been so much noticed that there are similar cyclic tides

in the emotions, and that certain feelings are stronger and more manifested in one age than in another. There have been distinctively penitential periods in the history of the Church, periods in which the sense of sin has been a burden and an oppression which weighed men down by thousands. I think our age is not such an age. The sense of sin does not, as a rule, press heavily at the present day upon men's consciences. And the consequence is, that the confessions and lamentations of a penitential period seem over-strained and exaggerated in a more unemotional and ethical period. How few people there are who can say, with all their hearts, the Confession in our Communion office, 'The remembrance of our sins is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable.' But there are some people who can do so; and there are preachers and teachers, to whom it has been given to probe the conscience and impress the sense of guilt, who seem like prophets, come to bring our sins to remembrance. And then men lose their brightness, and a dark cloud of anger seems to hang over them; and they pray and cry and wrestle, as they say, with God, to turn away His wrathful

indignation from them. They try with all their prayers and powers to make a change in God. They say they want to be converted, but instead they try to convert the Almighty, and by sobs and sighs to melt the cloud of wrath into heavenly sunshine. Fasts and penances and prayers and works of human merit, with other and various offerings and satisfactions, are made use of to bring back the forgotten graciousness of God.

Under some forms of religion, there is little wonder that men act in this way. Their gods are capricious and changeful, and as they may be piqued by an inadvertence, so are they accessible to a bribe. But how it can be so among Christians it is indeed hard to tell. For the first and peculiar fact of Christianity is that God is love and that in Him is no variableness nor shadow of turning. The Gospel of Christ was and is—You have a Father in heaven who cannot lose His tenderness, who pardons you graciously and loves you freely, and its message is 'Be ye reconciled to God.' 'For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the *world* through Him might be saved.' Ringing all through a

pardoned world we catch the saving words 'Only believe.' Yes, you say, I hear them, but what am I to believe? Tell me quickly, I want to know, for I have been put off with phrases and arguments and things I could not take hold of. What is this Gospel I am to believe? It is that God pardons and loves you now. Be certain about it, be certain with the faith of Christ. Let nothing take it from you; let not superstition, nor false teaching, nor consciousness of sin, nor want of feeling rob you of it; but cling to it, and keep looking at it; take it out and dwell upon it, as you take out some hidden treasure which is only yours, and press it to your heart, the free gift and token of your heavenly Father's love.

But this is no new doctrine; it is the doctrine of old fashioned theology, as well as the doctrine of Christian Rationalism. It is the truth which lies hidden under stern theological phrases; it is the truth which was S. Paul's, and Martin Luther's, and John Wesley's greatest inspiration, but which too often the technical terms of theology have hidden. For what would you say is the great subject of S. Paul's teaching, and a great subject of Reformation

teaching? Justification without the deeds of the law. What are the people who are called Evangelicals, whether Churchmen or Dissenters, always saying?—not that they always deeply feel it. It is that they have no righteousness, no merits of their own, that their best works are as filthy rags, and that all they have is of sovereign grace. And what is this salvation of sovereign grace, this justification without the deeds of the law, and not of human work or worth or merit? Nothing else than the Gospel truth that God is love, ever and unchanging to all His children.

But take another aspect of the subject, an aspect which is so conspicuous in all orthodox books of theology, I mean the doctrine of the Atonement as it is held by orthodox believers of all Evangelical communities. With such the foundation faith is, that for the sins of the world Christ has offered an atoning sacrifice to God; that by His offering He satisfied the claims of Divine justice and blotted out the handwriting that was against us. The claims, then, which God righteously had against us, according to this view, have been cleared off; the huge debt has been fully paid, and man redeemed from the

curse of the law. But when a debt has been paid, justice cannot demand that it should be paid again; and on this very ground, so all-important to some, free pardon is guaranteed.

For myself I prefer not to enter into such matters. I am not able to estimate the claims of Divine justice. I do not know what is meant by the satisfaction of Divine justice. I cannot reach, and I would not if I could, the arcanum in which the covenant between the Father and the Son is ratified. I wish to keep in my own place. I know that I have done wrong to my Father in heaven; and all I want to know is, will He, does He forgive me? If He pardons me, think you I shall be so presumptuous as to ask Him whether He is quite sure that He is doing right in pardoning me? Think you that I cannot let Him take care of His own honour and justice? Is the criminal to be the guardian of the judge's purity? I want pardon. If I can get it, I will take it and will ask no questions. If God pardons me, it must be right; and I will take the pardon and keep it, because I cannot live without it. The question of satisfaction may all be left to Him; 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'

My brethren, however the pardon be obtained, whether we understand how it was obtained or not, it is the King's own message to every one of us, it is the most glorious doctrine-fact in the Bible—justification without works. It means that God loves and gives, because He delights to give, and will not bargain with us, or make an exchange. He will prove that He loves by His free gift; having given His Son, with Him will He not freely give us all things? Do you feel pleased, when you have sent to a poor sick person some little solace which poverty could not provide, to have a farthing piece offered you as payment? When you make some precious gift to a valued friend, would you like to be offered a few shillings as a kind of return? And is God to be induced to give us His riches in glory by Christ Jesus, because we offer Him in exchange our insignificant gifts? He is pleased by your penitence, and does not call it filthy rags. He is pleased by your efforts to be good and to do right. 'Be not deceived God is not mocked.' As sin is sin to Him and never anything but sin, so piety is piety and not a filthy rag in His merciful eyes. But in the matter of pardon, He gives it you for that you

are His child. You have not to coax Him into giving. You have not to bribe Him into giving. The King of the Universe is not a miser who takes the poor slave's copper as part payment for his emancipation. He gives it as He gives the rain, as He gives the sunlight, as He gives the all-sufficient air; He gives it, as the Bible says, for the sake of Christ; and that is but another way of saying that He gives it for His own sake.

And yet men go on praying and praying, year after year, that God would pardon them; and they tell you that they have not repented enough and that their hearts are too hard. Just as the poor penitent who drags his starved and weary body from one sacred shrine to another, never expecting the favour of his Saint or God until the work is done and the coins of penitence all told down; so do Christians and Protestants deal with God, as if He were a dreadful tyrant, from whom pardon and pity had to be wrung by sobs and sighs and a broken heart. Why, He bends over you in your sad mistake, and keeps telling you that already He has given, and before you asked, what you are trying to wring out of Infinite

tenderness. How can we help but worship such a God as this, and adore His perfection, not because we are commanded to do it, not because we shall be punished if we do not do it, but because we have seen the 'King in His beauty,' and we cannot help ourselves; we are enslaved by His love, and led captive by His divine generosity.

And this seems to me to be the great truth, which—fence and fight around it as they may have done, and despite the unseemly vestures in which they have clothed it, and the poetical and musical eccentricities with which they have tried to recommend it,—has given to these intrusive questioners such power as they have had. For whenever, in the history of the Church, this true and saving view of God has been presented to men with more than usual distinctness, the effects have always been great. Although it is not the property of any particular party or sect, it is nearly always, by every party and sect, hidden from sight by doctrinal argumentation and ecclesiastical machinery. You may detect it in phrases, but alas, the phrases are but seldom plucked to pieces, and their saving content brought

clearly to sight. The phrases hold 'A pearl richer than all their tribe;' but men know not the treasure which is concealed.

The question, Are you saved? to be properly understood, must be expanded, to get its first signification clear, into this; Are you saved from a false and degrading and heathenish view of the character of God? It is by faith in the manifestation of God made by Christ, that we get the true and saving view, for the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father hath declared Him. Methinks if some, who now stand aloof from all religion, saw more clearly the revelation of Christ, they would find their reason bow before the matchless yet simple truth.

But I am afraid that some of those who were startled into gladness by this saving view of God, may possibly have thought that it meant more than it did. Perhaps some of them thought that, from that moment, they were saved from all the consequences, the penalties, and the punishments of their sins. It is possible even that some were satisfied with their false God, and very much satisfied with their lives unsaved from sin; only they wanted

to insure themselves against damnation. And if I am not in error in supposing that this may have been the case with some, and a possible danger to all, seeing that their new view and its consequent gladness were expressed by a phrase which seemed to imply a permanent moral condition, then I say, two great and most perilous blunders have been made. And the first is, that the assurance of God's love absolves us from the consequences of our own misdeeds. If, by the punishment of sin, be meant something arbitrary and capricious, in no way necessarily related to the sin, then it is true that a saving view of God for ever destroys the thought of such caprice. But God's love does not absolve us from the natural consequences of our own bad doings; often the saint finds that he possesses the sins of his youth, and to each one of us the warning may be given, 'Be sure your sin will find you out.'

But at least the assurance of God's love is assurance that we shall not pass into hell? I cannot say so. For what is hell? It is a moral condition, a bad moral condition, and therefore a miserable condition. To be bad through and through is hell. Just as

eternal life is not merely life in heaven, but the continuance and development of the heavenly life begun in this world,—even as it is said by S. John, 'This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent'—so hell is not merely a mode of future existence, but a present moral state; and if in this state, which is hell, we pass into the unseen world, then to hell we necessarily go, for we take ourselves with us. Death is not a renewing moral force, it is but a physical change. So that I dare not say, Your future salvation from hell, that is from developed wickedness, is secured, because at this moment you have seen the character of God, as made known by Christ, and believed in Him. To be saved from hell is to be saved from sin, and it is written, 'He shall save His people from their sins.' And this is the salvation which, I am so dreadfully afraid, has not been brought forward into sufficient prominence, the salvation by works on which S. James so strenuously insists. This is the second blunder. For I think that if the question had been made to mean, complete salvation from all evil, then that assisting ministers would have stood up

together with the listening people; there would have been nothing like sheep on the right hand and goats on the left, the division would have been left to a more infallible tribunal than that of a man's own opinion of himself; and the common prayer would have been 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

In very truth the work which is more especially laid upon some of us, is to teach *this* way of God more perfectly, to save men from the hell of sinful doings. Our people have not had those false views of God put before them, which have been a burden on so many Christian parties and communities, a burden which these *irrepressible* teachers at least have done something to remove. The true God has been made known to our people, but it may be there has been no salvation from sin going on in their lives. The world is easy to them, and they float along with the common current of business, party or fashion; but no great principles of right have been formed within them, no strong bulwarks to resist a flood of temptation when it comes, and men, who believed in a holy merciful God, have been drowned in the deeps of sin.

Yes, we are startled, from time to time, by

hearing of the fearful falls of those we have held in respect. And I dare say, in moments of thoughtfulness, we have seen that there are dangers and disasters which may happen to us. But we think they are by no means certain; that we may very likely go on all right to the end of the chapter. We do not think we shall fall or be fallen upon. We hope that we shall be free, or quite secure, after a while; but now we must take our chance, we cannot afford to lose it, it is too pleasant and too remunerative, and to guard against it by a new course and by daily watchfulness is a burden we cannot undertake. 'As it was in the days of Noe, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away.' It is by this unprepared, and, as I may say, unprincipled state, that these dreadful destructions are wrought.

There is a sin of dishonesty. A man thinks, perhaps, that he could scarcely fall into the sin and crime of stealing. But the principles of a saved life have not been growing in him, and so he floats he knows not whither. He spends more than he can afford, and hopes that it will come all right. He gambles, or bets, or

makes a show beyond his means, and becomes entangled. Then the flood arises, the temptation to be dishonest sweeps over him, and he is whirled away. He never thought he could do it, but he was unprepared, and it may be the end is a gaol.

There is a sin of lying. A man may feel that he is quite above it; but his courses are devious, and uncertain, and evasive. He adjusts himself with such dexterity as he can command to the occurring difficulties of his position; until at last he is fronted, without possibility of escape, and the temptation is too sweeping and urgent to be resisted; and, it may be, the man of honour has fallen, to fall again and again, until he is eaten through by the dry-rot of a life of falsehood.

There is a sin of impurity, and one may feel, 'Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?' But in vain self-security men trifle and toy and dally with that which may become a temptation. Suddenly the flood of passion rises like a torrent, and whirls them they know not where; until they arise, sober at last, to find themselves disgraced and ruined.

These are cases, and there are many more

such, in which the most miserable disasters overtake us, from which we might have been saved, if only day by day we had wrought at the formation of holy principles and habits, if only we had taken precaution in time. As a rule, it is too late to save ourselves when the raging water-flood is bearing its full volume upon our dwelling. Then, in that last terrible moment of temptation, you may and you must pity the perishing sinner, but you can do little to save him. It is the natural crisis of an unsaved life. The first hint of a possible danger which strikes across our minds, is a call of Providence to be ready. And we should all be warned to strengthen, in ourselves and in our children, those bulwarks against evil, which may save us in a trying hour. And unless with all our might we bring this salvation by works before our hearers, their cry, as they fall, will terribly condemn us, 'No man cared for my soul.'

But since I have spoken of the salvation by faith and the salvation by works, I must just remind you of the salvation by hope. To some, it may be to many, the thought of death and the future is an oppression, almost

a fear, and is not easily eradicated; by 'Fear of death they are all their lifetime subject to bondage.' It is only possible by slow degrees to rid ourselves of any mental habit, but we may do it by persistent effort. And the two things of which I have been speaking, firm faith in a God of love, and a disciplined life of sanctity, will plant in us hope. Death is our last burden and pain, but there is something which will master it, there is something which is better than our fears, it is the last fruit of a holy life.

When Schiller drew nigh to death, that quick, impassioned, receptive nature found that the mysteries of existence were resolving themselves. An hour or so before he died, he said, 'Many things are growing plain and clear to me;' and again, when some one asked him how he felt, he answered, 'Calmer and calmer.' That is what the assurance of faith and the practice of sanctity confer upon the soul; and when it is attained, no controversies or unbeliefs or new interpretations or suggested terrors will be able to disturb the consecrated life. Such an one, with Schiller, can say, 'Calmer and calmer,' and with S.

Paul, 'I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.' The common joys of life must pass away from you, and your strength grow little. The mysteries of existence may press around you, and no light of intellect pierce the gloom. But in the darkness one thing will be sure, oh, so sure, that God loves you and guards you and neither does He condemn you, and with this full salvation you will be *more* than conqueror.

> Love masters agony; the soul that seemed
> Forsaken, feels her present God again,
> And in her Father's arms
> Contented dies away.

THE KING'S HIGHWAY. [1]

We will go by the King's highway.—NUMBERS xx. 17.

IT is not uncommon for those who move in the eccentric paths of Christianity to affirm, 'It does not much matter which way we go to heaven, so long as we get there; we shall not be asked what sect we belonged to when we stand before the Judgment throne.' Now I am by no means sure what we shall be asked at the Judgment Day; I am not sure that I perfectly understand all that is meant by a Judgment Day; and where those, who seem to know what we are to be asked at the Judgment Day, obtain their information, it is impossible to tell. But if the divisions which separate Christians from each other, are so unimportant that they will not be considered at the Judgment Day, why in the world do we take such pains to make them and to maintain them? If the

[1] Preached at S. Andrew's, Holborn, April 30, 1876.

thought of the Judge and of the Kingdom of heaven reduce the divisions to insignificance, why do not these great thoughts always abide with us? and then our divisions would disappear.

Now if you are thinking of going to any particular place, and there are several ways of getting to it, in one respect it may be said that it does not matter which way you go; that is, it does not matter so far as the destination itself is concerned. But it may matter very much in other respects. If one road is a very good one, a way of pleasantness and a path of peace, with many a view of ancient beauty, nor wanting in modern culture; and another is narrow and rutty, with some rough travellers on the way not unwilling to relieve of their endowments those who happen to be better off than themselves—then, although the roads go to the same place, it does matter, and it may matter a good deal by which way a man goes.

I wish to show then, that providentially the Church of England is the King's Highway; that there are no objections to her of such vital importance as to compel us to choose some other way,—if the objections were vital,

then they would be something we might expect to be questioned about at the Judgment Day, but according to the saying of our friends, we shall not be asked what Church or sect we belonged to; that there are many very evident advantages, to compensate us for the sacrifice of any individual fancy or caprice we may make in holding fast by her; and that therefore, it is a becoming, a wise, and a religious thing, not only to adhere to the King's Highway, but also to gather together, as far as we can, the largest possible number in this one Communion and fellowship, so that, as the Apostle says, 'There may be no schism in the body.'

First then I wish to show that the Church of England has providential claims upon us, which no other Christian community in this country possesses; and that it has these, not merely on the ground of what is called Apostolical succession, but rather on the ground of Historical succession. If the Church of England had chanced to be Presbyterian instead of Episcopalian, my reasoning would have taken the same form. It rests, not on the absolute necessity of any one particular form of Church polity, for I do not

think that any particular organization is imperatively defined in Holy Scripture. It rests simply on the grounds of fact, on the grounds of reason, on the grounds of religious expediency; on the general ground of conforming to our providential location, unless there be what we regard as vital reasons for withdrawing from it.

Historically, the Church of England is the very Church which was first set up in this country. More than twelve centuries ago, this land, overrun and occupied by foreigners from beyond the sea—whose children we are—was heathen. And Christian Missionaries came, as they thought, to the very ends of the earth, to preach Christ to the savage English people. First in Kent, and then, step by step, to the West and the North, they pushed their converting work, until the land was purged of its idols, and Christ was worshipped as the Saviour, and His Church established. 'In England, alone in the West, a purely National Church arose,'[1] and from that time to this it has continued. There have been changes in it, corruptions in it, reformations in it; but still it is the Church

[1] Freeman's *Norman Conquest*, vol. i. p. 31.

which was founded by those Christian Missionaries twelve hundred years ago. It belongs to the History of England, to its growth and its glory; it has shared in its faults, and it has not refused its reforms. Not the creature of this man's wilfulness, or that man's obstinacy, or the other's proud rebelliousness; it is, whether for good or not, the Church planted by God's Providence in this country. I do not say that it is perfect, nor do I think so. I say that it is providential; that in this sense it may be described as the King's Highway; that the reasons for separating from it should be most vital and imperative; and that considerate and tolerant men will do much and make great sacrifices, before they break away from their providential position.

Secondly, I would say, there are no reasons sufficiently vital to compel men to forsake this providential highway of the King. And it is evident, on the very first blush, that unless men are to be perfectly alone in their religious worship, unless every religious community be dissolved, men must be willing to join together, although their individual tastes and prejudices are in some respects different. If people are to get

on together, they must, for the sake of any union whatever, bear and forbear. The greatest nuisances in all societies of men for united action are those small irritants, of one idea or one interest, who will destroy their party rather than their selfishness. Forbearance is just as necessary for the smallest sect as for the largest Church. There is but one alternative, and that is unlimited independency, each man alone and no religious communion in the world,—the splendid culture of self-involved solitaries. The Church knows, tolerably well, what that was in early days, and need not repeat the experiment.

The question then is, how much, how long are we to forbear? And there are two cases in which forbearance is quite out of the question. We may not be compelled by any Church or sect to say we believe what we do not believe. If we are distinctly asked, as a condition of membership, whether we believe a thing or not, we must speak the truth. And if the result be, that we are refused admittance to a community, or ejected from it, as a result of our truthfulness, then separation has been forced upon us, and our position is inevitable. The

second case is that, in which a Church absolutely denies and contradicts some doctrine which we hold as indispensable to human salvation. But beyond these regions of what we consider vital difference—and that is difference which we believe will be examined and taken account of at the Judgment Day—all else is merely matter of religious expediency.

Now, as a man does not forsake the family into which he was born, and cut himself from it, and refuse to recognise it, and change his name, unless some terrible necessity compel him; and as an Englishman does not without a very sufficient reason, even when circumstances induce him to settle in a foreign country, renounce his native land, and the immunities of his race, and become a naturalized foreigner; and as a true patriot makes sacrifices for his country, and even long endures a state of things which he does not like, sustained by hopes of change and improvement; so, a wise, loyal, and patriotic man will consider well, and make large sacrifices, before he forsakes the providential Church of his country. So long as that Church is not an inquisitor, compelling him to say that he accepts a faith which he does not; so long

as it holds the main lines of what he considers vital truth—his duty is a very evident one. The King's Highway is before him, and he must do his duty, pointing out defects, and seeking to create a public opinion which, in time, will be strong enough to make the desirable changes. What would England have become, if every far-seeing man who had detected faults in her laws or constitution had deserted her, and joined her rivals and enemies? Why, the great names of history are of those who nobly laboured and struggled for the improvement of the country to which by Divine Providence they belonged. Would England have been grander and better if she had been broken up into numberless little communities; if each County had set up for itself, if each town had set up for itself? When division begins there is no stopping it; everyone claims the same right to separate which others have claimed before him. Great nations fight for their unity, as for their existence. Germany, Italy, and the United States of America bear witness to this, as our own country would bear witness should ever an attempt be made to tear away Ireland from her. And if we would see independency, we may

study it, beneath a lurid light, in the Commune of Paris.

Alas! it may, with too much truth be said, that many, who would gladly have remained within the Church, were cast forth from her, and that in her day of triumph she made no allowance and had no pity. I may not justify this; but it is a fact that the Churchmen who were then so hard had suffered themselves, in like case. While there was toleration for Levellers and Fifth Monarchy, there was no toleration for Prelacy; and revenge, unhappily, is as sweet as it is bad. 'By one of the most sad perversities of our nature, human inconsistency, in matters of conscience and faith, displays itself most fully, precisely where it is most iniquitous and offensive. The very party—the very men who for half a century had devoted themselves, with admirable constancy, to the cause of religious liberty, and who looked upon this liberty as the only true basis of Christian Society—these very men, having attained to power, absolutely deprived of all religious freedom three great classes of persons, the Catholics, the Episcopalians, and the Freethinkers. . . .

'The Protestant Episcopalian Church, which

had been overthrown by the Presbyterian Parliament, found its hardships increased under the Republican Parliament; upon her the Sectaries had to satiate their vengeance and distrust; and they went so far as to interdict, even in private families, the presence of her Ministers, and the use of her Liturgy and prayers.'[1]

But, in very truth, the history of Christendom has been a history of exclusions. No sect but has suffered from it. To turn out the dissident, when it could not fine, imprison, or kill him, has ever been the custom. But, because it has been so in the past, there is no reason that it should go on in the present. Long continuance does not give a divine right to abuses, blunders, or crimes. At least tolerant men will say a word, when they can, in favour of unity and concord and large comprehension. The thought of Christ, unrealised except when death buries the divisions of earth, must ever be a Christian's dream, if facts prevent it from being his hope—'One fold and one Shepherd.'

Without blaming those who, in times past,

[1] Guizot's *English Revolution*. Preliminary Essay.

have departed from the Church and founded other communities, let us consider whether it is *now* absolutely necessary for a considerate religious man to do so ; let us see whether our Church, in her formularies, services, and doctrinal teachings, places before the people the general plan of salvation, as it is commonly accepted by the great mass of what are called orthodox Protestants. I do not ask what are the teachings of particular preachers, or the belief of particular persons. A Church or sect is not to be judged by the private opinions of individual members. Such can only speak for themselves, and can only win the assent which their individual reasonings may command. And I say at once, it is impossible for such Protestants to deny that the plan of salvation, as it is commonly understood, may be gathered from the Prayer Book and Articles of the Church, just as it is gathered from the Bible. No one can deny that the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, the Divinity of our Blessed Lord, and the Divinity of the Proceeding Spirit, the Atonement effected by the sacrifice of Christ, salvation by grace through faith, sanctification by the power of the Spirit of

Holiness, the general Judgment with the rewards and punishments of another life—I say no one can deny that these doctrines, however different men may interpret them, are presented in the book which represents the Church's general teaching; and nearly all evangelical Protestants will also affirm that these doctrines are, with them, foremost and vital in the matter of human salvation. Consequently no one need forsake his providential Church, that he may learn elsewhere the saving truths of the Gospel. He has them already.

But, it may be said, she teaches other things, which may not be so important as these, but which yet have their importance; which may be valued by some, but which are not accepted by others, and that therefore those who do not like them must go away and set up for themselves. This would be true, if the Church compelled them to say that they altogether approved of these things. No man may declare, for all the priests and presbyters, deacons or class leaders in the world, that he believes what he does not believe. The Church distinctly tells us, that nothing may be forced upon us unless it can be proved from the

Bible. The Article says, 'Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.'

There are multitudes of things, in every Christian community, on which the members hold different opinions. But no one may make his private opinion the test of another man's salvation; and the Church refuses to make anything an article of faith, unless it be clearly proved from Holy Scripture. She has customs and opinions and teachings, which she holds to be good and profitable and in conformity with the general spirit of the Bible; but any of her members are perfectly at liberty to think the opposite. She neither claims infallibility nor finality. She does not inquisitorially examine into the religious opinions and tastes of her members; they are not compelled to join in every part, or in every expression of the services. They may, if they think proper, legitimately try to bring improvement into her offices; so long as they allow others to re-

tain them as they are until the improvement is effected.

A distinguished Dissenting minister, describes our Church as 'creed-bound.'[1] Surely such a description is altogether unworthy of the liberal-minded writer. He might, with equal sense, discredit the liberties of England by describing her as law-bound. Every man who has a creed, whether it be social, political, or religious, is creed-bound; a Dissenting minister as much creed-bound as a Church clergyman. What we can affirm for our Church is, that limiting the 'fundamentals' to the fewest number possible, she leaves a very large field for individual freedom; and that as far as her clergy are concerned, they have a broader and more exercisable liberty of thought within the limits of the Church's creeds, than nonconforming ministers possess within the limits of their deacons' or elders' allowance. For myself, I would rather be creed-bound, than elder-bound or member-bound! The only creed of admission to the Church is the Apostles' Creed; and that creed says nothing about Bishops or forms of Church government; nothing about

[1] Rev. Baldwin Brown's *Principles of Ecclesiastical Truth.*

liturgies or forms of prayer; nothing about sacraments or the times or modes of their celebration. It neither defines nor determines the nature of inspiration, of human depravity, nor of Divine redemption. It is so simple and so elementary—because so ancient—that a Christian rationalist, no less than the minute and exacting Divine, may subscribe it. And this only is the test, as far as opinion is concerned, of Confirmation, i.e. admission to all her rights and privileges. The evident conclusion is, that Christians of every complexity almost, may enter through her wide and uninquisitorial portals; that no ordinary uneccentric Christian need say that he believes what he does not believe, or likes what he does not like. He is only asked to allow some things to others, and not to insist upon everything for himself.

But how small have been the differences which have broken the Church into so many parties. Thousands now see in them no ground for mutual hostility, yet are they ancient battle-fields, where men who slaughtered each other thought they did God service. Take that old and bitter source of division, Episcopalian or Presbyterian forms of Church government.

There are some in our Church who magnify the Episcopal office until it becomes a very Apostolate, who magnify it in every respect but by their dutiful obedience to it. But the great majority of sensible Protestants see in it a convenient and rational order, in no way opposed to any teaching of Holy Scripture. In every large community there must be division of labour, heads of departments, responsible officers; as, for instance, in an army there are Majors and Colonels and Generals. And proud as most Churchmen are of their Bishops, knowing well that no Christian community in this country can select as many men distinguished for such a combination of learning, eloquence, administrative talent, and stainless piety; yet many regard them as but the supreme or ruling presbyters. Others may think that the office means a great deal more, but no man is compelled to think that it means more. As a fair illustration of what I am saying, one, and that the largest, denomination of Christians in America, names those men Bishops, which in this country it calls Chairmen of Districts. Yet a miserable controversy raged on this subject, until when mingled with politics it

became civil war; and the result was, what the combatants least wished to see, the wide extension of Deism.[1]

Equally improper, as a cause for dividing the Church, is difference of opinion as to what are called forms of prayer. Remember, the opposition is not between forms and no forms; all prayers expressed in words are forms of prayer. Even silent prayer is a vague *form* of prayer, for it must image itself in half-thought words. The difference is, between this man's form and that man's form; and whether a form be made by some saint of God in the past, or put together after solemn thought and consultation by many such men—whether such forms are as helpful and inspiring, as one made by a religious teacher on the spur of the moment,—all this is matter of taste and experience. For myself, I prefer that the minister I am to hear preach, should not intrude himself upon me in the prayers; and practically we find that many, whose predecessors would have refused a regulated service of prayer, are now adopting

[1] See Dorner's *History of Protestant Theology.*

liturgies of their own. Whether our prayer are to be pre-arranged or to be pore, is not imperatively decided by H Scripture. The only imperative thing is that we should pray, that the desire of our souls should be towards God, and the moving of our souls to His throne of Grace.

Again, no man need leave the Church because the Sacrament of Baptism is not usually administered according to his understanding of the matter. So long as he will allow those, who find Infant Baptism a privilege and a means of grace, to practise it, he may decline it for his own children, and in adult years bring them to the Font. In very truth, most of those who separate from the Church, do so, not because they cannot retain their faiths and opinions within the Church, but because they cannot compel everybody else to accept them.

And now, as I conclude this sermon, I would put before you the opinions of two very distinguished, though very different men. The first is from a speech delivered more than a hundred years ago by one of England's great-

ien, I mean Edmund Burke; and the rom an address by one of England's atest philosophers, I mean John Stuart Mill. Burke says that 'Some assert that if you alter her symbols, you destroy the being of the Church. But,' he goes on, 'this for the sake of the liberty of the Church I must absolutely deny. The Church like every other body corporate may alter her laws without changing her identity. As an independent Church professing fallibility . . . she has always claimed and exercised the right of reforming whatsoever appeared amiss in her doctrines, her discipline, or her rites. She did so when she shook off the Papal Supremacy in the reign of Henry VIII. . . . . She did so when she twice changed the liturgy, in the reign of King Edward. She did so when she cut off three articles from her original forty-two, and reduced them to the present thirty-nine; and she certainly would not lose her corporate identity, nor subvert her fundamental principles, though she were to leave ten of the thirty-nine which remain, out of any future confession of the faith . . . . She would oppose her fundamental principles, if

she were to deny herself the prude
cise of such capacity of Reformation.'[1]

And now for Mr. Mill. He says 'If
were to desert the Church who put a large and liberal construction upon its terms of communion . . . the national provision for religious teaching would be left to the narrowest . . . and those not the most likely to improve it. And therefore,' he says, 'if it were not an impertinence for me to tender advice on such a matter, I should say, let all who conscientiously can, remain in the Church.'[2]

Away then from these little tumults and polemics, away from the jealousies and narrow thoughts and rigid inch measures with which we try to survey the infinite; away from our blunders, and baby-guessings which we take for perfect wisdom; away from the veils which have hidden men's hearts from each other, and masked the saints of God that they were not known; away from these things which spoil the Church below, let us look to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, to the

[1] Speeches, vol. i. p. 102.
[2] Inaugural address at St. Andrews.

just men, at last, made perfect, and to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls; with the great heaven of God above and beyond, at least we may labour and look for a little heaven below; and our inspiration and hope and prayer shall be—'One fold and one Shepherd.'

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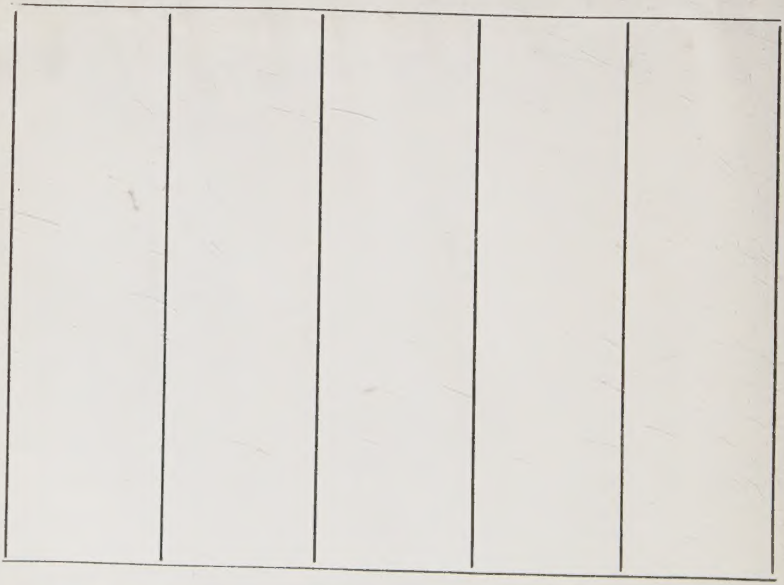

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